United Nations E/2008/15

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
23 May 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Item 10 of the provisional agenda*
Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, which is submitted to the Economic and Social Council in accordance with General Assembly resolution 1823 (XVII) and Council resolution 1817 (LV), provides an update on the perspectives and developments in regional cooperation and the work of the regional commissions since the substantive session of the Council of 2007.

The report is organized in two chapters, the first of which provides regional perspectives on major issues on the global agenda, including a midpoint overview on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The overview recognizes progress made in the various regions, but also identifies gaps in implementation and underlines interregional, intraregional and rural-urban disparities in achieving a number of the goals. It underscores the threat posed by new challenges, notably the rising costs of food and energy, which may halt or reverse the progress achieved so far. The report also provides a regional review on the question of financing for development in advance of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, which is to be held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008. Priority issues and challenges relating to the six leading actions set out in the Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the first International Conference on Financing for Development, held in 2002, are highlighted as they pertain to specific regions. In addition, chapter I highlights a number of regional initiatives to address the challenges of climate change and promote South-South cooperation as a vehicle for development and for reducing disparities in all regions.

* E/2008/100.

08-35215 (E) 230608

Chapter II of the report provides an update on additional major policy issues of relevance to the respective regions that were discussed during the ministerial sessions of the regional commissions and at other high-level regional conferences and meetings. It also reviews the efforts by the commissions to strengthen and bring more coherence to the regional dimension of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, in line with General Assembly resolution 62/208. The chapter also offers a brief update on the interregional cooperation among the commissions, including through the regular meetings of the Executive Secretaries.

The resolutions and decisions adopted by the regional commissions during the period under review that require action by the Economic and Social Council or are brought to its attention will be issued as an addendum to the present report (E/2008/15/Add.1).

The summaries of the economic surveys and trends in the five regions are provided to the Council for its consideration. As they are released, the annual reports of the regional commissions for the period under review will be issued as supplements to the official records of the Economic and Social Council.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Regional perspectives on the global agenda	1–46	3
	A. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: a midpoint regional overview	1–16	3
	B. Financing for development: regional reviews	17–29	7
	C. Climate change: regional initiatives	30–39	11
	D. South-South cooperation: a vehicle for development and reducing disparities in the regions	40–46	15
II.	Developments in other selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation	47–63	17
	A. Additional policy issues addressed by the regional commissions at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings	47–57	17
	B. Operational activities for development: the regional dimension	58–61	21
	C. Interregional cooperation among the regional commissions	62–63	22

I. Regional perspectives on the global agenda

A. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: a midpoint regional overview

1. Most global, regional and national assessments, including those produced by the United Nations regional commissions in collaboration with United Nations and non-United Nations partners, point to a mixed performance and uneven progress in achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. This mixed performance is not only true interregionally, but also intraregionally, and often within the same country, with striking disparities between rural and urban areas in many instances.

2. As the world's most economically dynamic, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region has made significant progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The achievements have been most impressive in reducing extreme poverty, providing universal primary education and improving gender inequality in access to education. The region as a whole is on track to reach the target of reducing extreme poverty by half. The proportion of people living below $1 a day in the region dropped from 32 per cent in 1990 to 17 per cent in 2004 — less than half of the poverty rate in sub-Saharan Africa (41 per cent) — helping 367 million people escape the misery of absolute poverty.

3. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean also appear to be on track in meeting their commitment to halve the 1990 extreme poverty rate by 2015. The most recent estimates by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) show that some 15 million people in the region lifted themselves out of poverty during 2006, and that another 10 million were no longer destitute. For the first time since 1990, the total number of people living in poverty in the region dropped below 200 million, and in 2007, those numbers dropped even further.

4. By contrast, many reports published in the run-up to the midpoint for achievement of the Goals, including the 2008 report of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on assessing progress in Africa towards the Millennium Development Goals show that the countries of the African continent are most unlikely to reach the Goals by the target date. The evidence presented in the ECA report and in other reports nevertheless indicates that there have also been positive developments in recent years and that progress is being made across the continent in a number of areas. In 2007, the number of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa levelled off, and the poverty rate has declined by nearly six percentage points since 2000. There have also been significant improvements in net enrolment ratio in primary education and in gender equality and women's empowerment, as shown by the fact that sub-Saharan Africa recorded the largest share of women in single or lower houses of parliament between 1990 and 2007.

5. There are, however, significant disparities within the same region and mixed success in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, emerging challenges, including rising food and energy prices, and the impact of climate change, imperil and threaten to reverse progress achieved towards some of the Goals. In this regard, the above-mentioned ECA assessment showed that in 46 African countries for which data were available there has been a clear decrease in

the proportion of people suffering from hunger, a situation exacerbated by drought and the heavy dependence on rain-fed agriculture in Africa.

6. Other regions find themselves in similar situations. In the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region, for example, food security also emerged as a priority, with countries of the region, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia, among the major importers of cereals in the world. In the ECLAC region, food consumer price indexes have risen in the majority of the regional economies at an annual rate of between 6 and 20 per cent, with an average of about 15 per cent during 2007. ECLAC estimates that the continuation of this trend will force another 15.7 million Latin Americans into destitution and a similar number to fall below the poverty line.

7. The intraregional disparities are also striking. For example, even in areas where the Asian and Pacific region as a whole is on track, there are countries and country groups that are lagging behind, a reality that is often masked by the regional average dominated by data received from large countries. Those with the greatest difficulties are often least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Many least developed countries, especially those in South Asia, are making slow progress, or even falling behind in some cases, in reducing extreme poverty, child hunger and the under-five mortality rate and in improving maternal health. South Asia also has some of the highest maternal mortality ratios in the world, with 188,000 maternal deaths yearly, 78 per cent of the estimated total maternal deaths in the entire Asia-Pacific region in 2005.

8. In the ESCWA region, while the member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and several Maghreb and Mashreq countries are on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goal targets, the least developed countries and conflict-ridden Iraq and Palestine lag significantly behind, making it unlikely that they will be able to meet the majority of the targets by 2015. Based on data for 12 countries in the region, representing 74 per cent of the region's total population, the proportion of population living below national poverty lines has remained at approximately 23 per cent. Among the least developed countries of the region, the poverty rates are almost double that rate. Due to ongoing conflict, there has been an enormous increase in poverty in Iraq and Palestine, with approximately one third of the population of Iraq and almost one half of the population of Palestine living in poverty. In Yemen, 45.6 per cent of children were underweight in 2003, compared to less than 4 per cent in other ESCWA member countries.

9. In the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region, income levels vary from well above $20,000 for Western Europe and North American countries, to as low as $2,000 for Moldova and $1,200 for Tajikistan. Consequently, while the Millennium Development Goal targets have largely been reached in the countries of North America and Western and Central Europe, a significant number of Goals will be difficult for most of the countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia and South-Eastern Europe to reach. For example, while the region shows a decline in child mortality, international estimates suggest that in a number of countries in the above subregions the pace is not fast enough to achieve the target of reducing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five by 2015. In the countries of Central Asia and Azerbaijan, for example, it is estimated that 6 to 10 children out of 100 do not reach five years of age.

10. In terms of mixed performance towards the various Millennium Development Goals, evidence suggests that progress in achieving universal primary education and the related target of gender parity in education has been a success to varying degrees in all regions. While most African countries are likely to reach gender parity by 2015, evidence also suggests that women across the regions remain more exposed to poverty and face more obstacles in overcoming it. For 12 countries in the ECLAC region for which information is available, the femininity index of poverty[1] had, up until 2002, a relatively stable average value of about 108.5 women for every 100 men. This ratio increased, however, in 2005, reaching 112 women for every 100 men. This situation occurs even in countries that do not have high absolute poverty levels. Similarly, the gains achieved by women in the ESCWA region in achieving access to education have not yet been translated into greater economic and political participation. In general, the share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector has remained constant, at 18 per cent, in all ESCWA subregions since 1990. The percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments in the region has increased only slightly since 1990, standing at 8.7 per cent in 2007, a figure among the lowest in the world.

Box 1
Measuring gender parity: the African gender development index

Gender is a cross-cutting element in most of the Millennium Development Goals, a fact which presents a challenge in the identification of comprehensive indicators that adequately capture progress on gender issues. To address the inadequacy of monitoring mechanisms and assist African Governments in tracking progress towards gender equality and women's advancement, ECA, through its African Centre for Gender and Social Development, has developed the African gender and development index. The index is a tool that maps the extent of gender inequality in Africa and assesses the performance of Governments in addressing the issue. Such an assessment of 12 African countries indicated that women's income in Africa is slightly more than half of that of men in most of those countries. When used to assess the performance of African countries in implementing international and regionally agreed commitments, the index revealed that Governments score high both in terms of ratifying and developing policies for gender equality, although their performance is rather poor when it comes to implementation.

11. Among the challenges across the regions is also the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability, which is high on the agenda of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in 2008. From 1990 to 2005, land covered by forest decreased in sub-Saharan Africa by 3 per cent. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the proportion of land covered by forest diminished by 8.5 per cent during the same period, suggesting a worrisome trend in the region. Thanks to reforestation efforts in many countries, including Armenia, Azerbaijan,

[1] The index concerns women between 20 and 59 years of age living in urban areas. It is over 100 when women are overrepresented in the group of poor households.

China and Viet Nam, the Asia-Pacific region as a whole registered the same forest cover in 2005 as in 1990. However, some of the economic growth has been at the cost of rapid deforestation in other countries of the region.

12. In most regions, insufficient progress has been made to improve access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. The rural-urban gap is still wide, lowering national aggregate figures in countries of various regions. In the ECE region, the percentage of households reached by piped water in a number of countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus is usually more than 80 per cent in urban areas, but it is often very low in the country side. In 10 countries of the region, less than 30 per cent of rural dwellings have piped water, with a predictable impact on public health. With a decrease from 85 per cent in 1990 to 66 per cent in 2004, the Asia-Pacific region is currently off-track to achieve the target of reducing, by half, the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation in rural areas by 2015. In percentage terms, this puts the region far behind the ECLAC region (51 per cent in 2004) and close to sub-Saharan Africa (72 per cent in 2004). Despite the fact that 15 African countries have increased access to clean water in rural areas by 25 per cent, the changes are still too low for Africa to reach the target of halving the number of people without access to clean drinking water by 2015.

13. Across the regions, to varying degrees, the off-track countries or those that are making slow progress face several "gaps" in reaching the Millennium Development Goal targets by 2015: "growth gaps", "strategy gaps", "policy gaps", "implementation gaps", and "resource gaps".[2] These gaps are hampering progress towards achieving the Goals. There is strong evidence to suggest that absence of pro-poor economic growth, lack of Goal-based development strategies and policies, the failure to implement such strategies efficiently and the scarcity of adequate financial resources have impeded progress in this regard in many countries in all five regions.

14. For example, Africa's average annual growth rate of approximately 5.8 per cent remains significantly lower than the 7 per cent annual growth rate required to reduce poverty by half by 2015, indicating an important "growth gap". In the Asia-Pacific region, the national development plans of many off-track countries are not generally based on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The implications of achieving Millennium Development Goal targets on public expenditures are seldom incorporated into national development strategies, and annual budgets do not contain specific allocations related to the targets and indicators, indicating a "strategy gap".

15. In the ECE region, while a general trend towards poverty reduction can be observed in countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, there is still a large sector of the population living in relative poverty, with a proportion living in absolute poverty (fixed at 2 United States dollars a day, taking into account the high heating costs). This is particularly true in the case of rural areas and for unemployed and unskilled labour, ethnic minorities, retired and elderly persons and persons with health problems. The high number of young women, single mothers, women living in large families and older women who are identified as poor is clear evidence of the

[2] See E/ESCAP/64/37. The gaps identified in the context of Asia-Pacific are applied across the regions in the context of the present report.

feminization of poverty. Addressing these "policy gaps", the difference between selected policy indicators, including gross domestic product (GDP) growth, social expenditure and financing, is therefore crucial to improving the ability of off-track countries to reach the Millennium Development Goal targets by 2015.

16. Off-track countries also face problems related to governance and implementing policies and strategies into effective actions on the ground. Lack of adequate resources to finance actions to achieve the Millennium Development Goals is also a clear and widening gap. For least developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region; for example, the financial resource gap to reach the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 could be as high as $8 billion annually. Addressing both the "implementation gaps" and the "resource gaps" faced by many countries in various regions indicates that all stakeholders, including Governments and the international community, need to make more concerted efforts in this regard. Fostering a global partnership for development, notably on the trade and financing for development agenda, is crucial to achieve the seven other Goals in the regions. The aggregate score card for all regions shows that the challenge of meeting the Goals, including in Africa, is not insurmountable if both national and international targeted policy measures are scaled up in a number of the critical areas. International cooperation to address and reduce the effect of rising food and energy prices on off-track countries is an urgent priority if the international community is to maintain the level of progress achieved thus far.

B. Financing for development: regional reviews

17. In its resolution 62/187, the General Assembly reiterated that the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in late 2008 should assess progress made, reaffirm goals and commitments, share best practices and lessons learned and identify obstacles and constraints encountered, actions and initiatives to overcome them, measures for further implementation, as well as new challenges and emerging issues. In the same resolution, the Assembly called upon the regional commissions to hold regional consultations, as appropriate, during the first half of 2008, to serve as inputs to the preparations for the Review Conference.

18. In response, the regional commissions held their regional consultations on financing for development from April through June 2008. During the consultations, for which the commissions prepared background studies and documents, the specificity, priority areas and challenges for each region were emphasized. At the same time gaps in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus across the regions, albeit with varying degrees and emphasis, were revealed.

19. Mobilizing domestic resources for development remains a challenge in the developing countries in the regions. This is particularly true in the ECA region, where macroeconomic data show that the average annual savings-to-GDP ratio increased only slightly, from 19 per cent in the pre-Monterrey period to 22 per cent in the post-Monterrey period (see table 1). Low savings rates are also recorded in the ECLAC region and in the Central, Eastern and South-Eastern European countries where savings rates averaged less than 20 per cent of GDP. By contrast, the average savings rate in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region increased from 33.6 per cent in 2002 to 43.5 per cent in 2006. The average savings rate in the newly developed Asian economies increased from 29.8 per cent to 31.6 per cent

during the same period, although much of that increase in savings was concentrated in a few countries. Banking infrastructure and governance need to be improved and potential capital markets need to be harnessed for resource mobilization, notably in the ECA and ECLAC regions.

Table 1
Selected macroeconomic indicators for Africa

Indicator (In percentages unless otherwise indicated)	*Pre-Monterrey (1998-2001)*	*Post-Monterrey (2002-2005)*
Overall		
Economic growth	3.3	4.0
Inflation	11.8	9.2
Domestic resources		
Savings/GDP	19.0	22.0
Investment/GDP	19.7	20.1
International resources		
FDI[a]	11.9	18.1
FDI/GDP	2.1	2.4
Trade		
Real export growth	3.7	4.9
Exports/GDP	29.0	33.0
Cooperation		
ODA[a]	16	28
External debt		
Debt[a]	274.0	293.0
Debt/GDP	62.0	47.0
Total debt service/GDP	5.9	4.4

Sources: *ECA (2007); World Bank (2007); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (2007).*

[a] Billions of United States dollars.

20. The experience of the emerging economies in the ECE region suggests that the development of financial institutions may not, in and of itself, provide the hoped for economic stimulus. Significant progress has been made in developing banking institutions in the ECE region, but these financial entities have tended to borrow from abroad instead of significantly promoting domestic savings, and have focused on consumer loans and real estate investment instead of investing in more development-oriented activities. Inclusive finance and improved financial intermediation to increase the access of rural poor households and small firms to financial services is needed in most developing and emerging economies.

21. Foreign direct investment (FDI) continues to be among the most important sources of financing for development. In general, since the Monterrey conference in 2002, there has been an increase in the flow of FDI to the various regions. For instance, the net FDI flows to Africa increased from an average of $11.9 billion in the pre-Monterrey period to $18.1 billion in the post-Monterrey period. However,

despite the fact that macroeconomic stability has improved in many African countries and policies have been introduced to attract private capital flows, FDI in sub-Saharan Africa is low in comparison to other developing subregions.

22. Inflows of FDI to the ESCWA region grew significantly post-Monterrey, reaching $49 billion in 2006. Investment rates in the member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the non-European Union countries in South-east Europe and the 12 new member States of the European Union were in the range of 20 to 25 per cent of GDP, compared to an average of 2.4 per cent in Africa. Investment, including FDI, remains a primary engine for economic growth and social development in Asia-Pacific developing countries, with the FDI flow to the region having increased substantially over the last few years.

23. The flow of FDI is, however, concentrated in a few countries and/or is largely targeted at the natural resources sector. This is true both in Africa and in the energy-rich countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as in the Asian and Pacific region, where China and Singapore together account for almost 50 per cent of the inflow to the region. In the same time, outward FDI flow from Asia-Pacific developing countries and other regions is increasing. In the ESCWA region, FDI outflows in 2005 from the six States of the Gulf Cooperation Council totalled $14 billion, as compared to the combined FDI inflows to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic, which reached $10 billion. Enhanced regional cooperation could help reduce disparities within the regions, including through improvement of the investment climate, leading to more FDI to the poorer countries in all regions.

24. Strengthened regional cooperation is also needed in order to help address financing gaps that FDI flows are unable to fill. Financing for infrastructure development is a case in point. Despite the richness of its financial resources, the Asian and Pacific region is facing a large infrastructure financing gap, estimated at $200 billion a year, while only 3.5 per cent of the total amount of private investment in infrastructure to developing countries between 1990 and 2003 went to countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Regional mechanisms could be established either by strengthening the existing mechanisms or developing new institutions to mobilize regional and international resources for infrastructure development. Regional cooperation could also assist countries in strengthening their institutional and policy environment for the development of vibrant and deeper capital markets, as well as the development of instruments or mechanisms for financial risk management, notably in view of the increased volatility of financial markets. The ECE region attained a high level of economic integration through several subregional agreements, including through the European Union, the Central European Free Trade Agreement and the Eurasian Economic Community. Pan-European economic integration has attracted capital to the region, promoting increased domestic and intraregional investment, and providing a good example for other regions.

25. In the countries of the Asian and Pacific region, in particular the countries of East and South-East Asia, the link between trade and development has been clearly demonstrated. The region has benefited from the multilateral trading system, which has contributed to lifting millions of people out of poverty. For example, developing countries in the region have nearly tripled their share of world trade since 1990. By contrast, Africa's trade position remains marginal, with its share of global merchandise exports in 2006 standing at 2.8 per cent and its share of global export

of services at 2.4 per cent, although, as a result of increasing commodity prices, the export sector is now growing stronger in the region. The average ratio of exports to GDP also increased in the post-Monterrey period (see table 1).

26. Whether in Africa, the Asia-Pacific or other regions, more opportunities could be presented under a more liberalized multilateral trade regime of the World Trade Organization. Regional and bilateral trade agreements continue to liberalize trade faster than multilateral trade agreements, but they are less efficient in net trade creation. It is therefore vital that the Doha Round of trade negotiations deliver on its development agenda promises. Operationalizing the Aid for Trade initiative is needed in order to help African and other developing countries, notably the least developed, to maximize the benefits of liberalized trade by addressing supply constraints, issues relating to upgraded transport policies and infrastructure, trade facilitations, enhanced institutional capacity, better standards testing facilities, more reliable energy sources and supplies and information and communications technology (ICT) networks. With only a 7 per cent share of the total Aid for Trade flow in 2005, the ECLAC region is lagging behind the ESCAP and ECA regions, which received, respectively, 50 and 30 per cent.

27. Official development assistance continues to be a vital source of resources for countries in the ECA region, in particular those without the capacity to attract private capital. As a consequence of recent commitments and a stronger engagement, ODA to Africa has increased to an average of $28 billion over the period from 2002 to 2005 (see table 1). Donors are still not on track to meet their commitments, however, and recent aid flows tend to concentrate in a few countries and social sectors (emergency aid and debt relief). There is a need to increase allocation to the productive sectors and to scale up efforts to improve aid effectiveness. The inflow of ODA to the recipient countries of the ESCWA region has declined in almost all cases, except Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine. Total ODA flows to the ESCAP region have declined from 0.9 per cent of the total GDP of countries in the region in 1990 to 0.3 per cent in 2005, although in absolute terms it has increased from $15 billion to $20 billion. On average, for the period from 1980 to 2004, the shares of ODA for countries in the ECLAC region held fairly steady at between 11 and 8 per cent, on average, of total ODA flows. The decline in ODA to most middle-income countries in the regions requires a more effective utilization of aid in these countries and reveals the need for those countries to improve the investment environment in order to attract private capital. Donor countries also need to increase their efforts to reach the goal of allocating 0.7 per cent of their GDP to ODA.

28. Remittances sent home by migrant workers from developing countries are estimated to have reached more than $200 billion in 2006, more than twice the level of development assistance from all sources., This fact underpins the growing importance of remittances as a significant source of external finance. Of the top five remittance-earning countries in the world in 2006, three, India ($24.7 billion), China ($22.5 billion) and the Philippines ($14.9 billion), are in the Asia-Pacific region. For many countries in the region, remittances now far exceed FDI and ODA received. The vital importance of remittances is also recognized in many countries in the ECLAC region and in some recipient countries in the ESCWA region. While remittances are private funds, and therefore should not be seen as substitutes for development assistance, they are, however, an important source of external finance with great potential for development impact. There is growing evidence to suggest

that remittances play a crucial role in reducing household poverty through increased consumption and investments in housing, health and education. They also foster entrepreneurship by facilitating the formation of small businesses by other members of households. Greater regional and international cooperation is needed in order to facilitate the flow of remittances, in particular to overcome technical barriers to money transfer and high transaction costs and to further tap into the potential large benefits of temporary migration for both the host countries and home countries.

29. As a result of the debt-relief efforts under the auspices of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, the debt-to-GDP ratio in Africa dropped from an average of 62 per cent in the pre-Monterrey period to 47 per cent in the post-Monterrey period (see table 1). Debt levels are still high, however, and difficulties are faced by countries not part of the debt initiative in meeting their debt obligations and mobilizing resources to finance their development. During the first joint annual meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, the ministers called for more flexibility in the eligibility criteria for debt relief. Three Asia-Pacific countries (Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Nepal) are also likely to benefit from the debt initiative.

C. Climate change: regional initiatives

30. It has been said that the vast majority of those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change are also the least responsible for contributing to it in the form of green house gas emissions. This is true in the ECA, ECLAC and ESCWA regions and in the case of the poorest countries in Asia-Pacific. Yet while Africa contributes only about 3.8 per cent of total green house gas emissions, the countries of the continent are among the most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. African economies depend largely on agriculture, fisheries, forestry and tourism, which are particularly vulnerable to environmental changes.

31. Similarly, the ESCWA region contributes only around 3 per cent to the world's carbon dioxide emissions, while it is expected to suffer, among other consequences, from the rise in sea water levels, which threaten to inundate large parts of the most fertile agriculture lands of the Nile Delta in Egypt and Shatt-al-Arab in Iraq, as well as from reduced precipitation in the Mediterranean basin and in the upstream countries that supply almost 80 per cent of the renewable freshwater to the region.

32. While the ECLAC region does not contribute heavily to global energy emissions, several reports have shown that the economies and populations of Central America and the Caribbean countries are at risk as the result of disasters that, increasingly, are being attributed to climate change. Such disasters also threaten many countries in the ESCAP region, as demonstrated by events in May 2008, when Cyclone Nargis devastated Myanmar and an earthquake measuring 8 on the Richter scale struck Sichuan province in China. According to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, worldwide, about 79 per cent of the fatalities caused by disasters occur in Asia-Pacific.

33. In the ESCAP region, priority is being given to multi-hazard disaster risk reduction, including through the use of the Multi-Donor Voluntary Trust Fund on Tsunami Early Warning Arrangements in the Indian Ocean and South-East Asia,

which is administered by the commission, to support projects in the development of tsunami advisory services, warning dissemination, dedicated disaster communication systems, capacity-building in standard operating procedures and community-based hazard mapping. These efforts are aimed at ensuring a coordinated approach in building and enhancing tsunami early warning system capacities at regional, subregional and national levels.

Box 2

Interregional cooperation for disaster assessment and risk reduction

With disasters increasingly attributed to climate change, the regional commissions are stepping up their interregional cooperation for disaster assessment and risk reduction. Thanks to ongoing collaboration between ECLAC and the World Bank, and building on the ECLAC methodology to assess the socio-economic costs of disasters, experts from the commissions met in a seminar hosted in Santiago in May 2008 to discuss the establishment of an interregional network specialized in disaster assessment and risk reduction. This promising initiative aims to contribute to the building up of regional and national institutional capacities in this field.

34. As in most complex transboundary development challenges, some mitigation and adaptation initiatives to face more effectively with the impact of climate change are better implemented on a regional scale but require regional coordination. This is particularly so with regard to the socio-economic impact assessment of climate change including: adaptation costs; social vulnerability; public policies, including those aiming to improve the carbon intensity performance of economies and harmonize climate-related actions with economic growth; energy security; water and land resources management; and combating environmental degradation.

35. The Asia-Pacific region, with two thirds of the world's poor, faces serious challenges in harmonizing climate actions with prevalent rapid economic growth, which reduces poverty. ESCAP has been promoting "green growth" as a regional approach for achieving sustainable development. The green growth approach aims to improve the ecological quality of economic growth through addressing key policy areas, such as green tax and budget reform, sustainable infrastructure, greening business, sustainable consumption and production and development of eco-efficiency indicators. As part of its efforts, ESCAP, in coordination with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), organized a subregional consultation on the sidelines of the Climate Change Talks held in Bangkok from 31 March to 4 April 2008 under the auspices of the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which are to be followed by another consultation with North-East Asian countries. The consultations were aimed at initiating a subregional dialogue among member States on key components of the Asia-Pacific perspective, to be reflected in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, including the development of mechanisms for promoting the active participation of Asia-Pacific developing countries in the global green house gas mitigation actions, innovative options for a post-2012 climate action framework and an effective approach to promoting national mitigation and adaptation actions in the context of sustainable development through regional

cooperation. To promote policy options, ESCAP is collaborating with the Government of Japan on the establishment of the "Asia-Pacific gateway to climate and development", a web-based knowledge management tool on policy options for maximizing socio-economic and environmental co-benefits of climate change mitigation action and mainstreaming climate change adaptation into national development planning.

36. In response to calls by the African Heads of State and Government and their expressed concerns on the vulnerability of Africa's socio-economic and productive systems to climate change and variability and the continent's low mitigation and response capacities, ECA has partnered with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to develop and implement, in collaboration with relevant regional and international institutions, a major climate information for development in Africa programme, with a view to promoting and supporting the integration of climate risk management into pertinent policy and decision-making processes and sectoral practices throughout the continent. The overall purpose of the programme is to mainstream climate risk management in sensitive sectors of the economy. The programme specifically aims to achieve tangible results in the following areas: (a) policies: political engagement of African States in managing climate risk to assist development and adaptation to climate change; (b) practices: improvement of agriculture and food security, water resources, health, energy and environment in African countries through better climate risk management; (c) services: adequate information services provided to relevant stakeholders (public sector, private sector and civil society) for the full range of climate risk management practices required to deliver the desired development outcomes in all countries; and (d) data and infrastructure: improved data and analytical products for sectoral climate risk management, monitoring climate variability and climate change, with strengthened observation networks and service centres in Africa.

37. ECLAC has been collaborating with countries from the region to promote regional cooperation and the adoption of an integrated approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. Activities include collaboration with international efforts to replicate the economic assessment carried out in the "Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change" for several countries and subregions. In addition, ECLAC was in charge of a pre-feasibility study for Central America that was presented at the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State of the subregion on climate change that took place on 29 May 2008 and is also teaming up with Governments and other relevant stakeholders in carrying out assessments for Brazil and countries of the Caribbean. On a related initiative, ECLAC and the Andean Community assisted Andean countries in the elaboration of a document on the impact of climate change in those countries. The document was discussed at the Fifth Summit of Heads of State and Government of Latin America and the Caribbean and Europe, held in Lima, on 18 May 2008. ECLAC is supporting the development of programmatic projects for the clean development mechanism, particularly those dealing with urban sustainability, and has been supporting national and regional exchanges on ways to reduce emissions caused by deforestation and forest degradation.

38. With the support of ESCWA, and through coordination with the League of Arab States and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)/Regional Office for West Asia, a number of initiatives were undertaken by the countries in the region, including the adoption and progressive implementation of the Arab Initiative on Sustainable Development in 2002, the Abu Dhabi Declaration on Energy and

Environment in 2003 and the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change in 2007. All of these initiatives include and promote climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, with the latter emphasizing, in particular: the inclusion of policies to deal with climate change issues in all sectors within national and regional policies for sustainable development; the adoption of national and regional action plans dealing with climate change issues; and mitigation programmes focusing on the production and use of cleaner fuels, improving the efficiency of energy use in all sectors and diversifying energy sources in accordance with the prevailing economic and social conditions. Coordinated efforts by ESCWA, the League of Arab States and UNEP contributed to the adoption by Arab countries of policies related to energy efficiency labelling, the clean development mechanism and energy efficiency building codes. Action is also ongoing to formulate an Arab climate change adaptation and mitigation strategy. In addition, ESCWA assists member countries in the preparation and implementation of integrated water resources management strategies and promotes the sustainable use and management of water resources as part of its contribution to climate change adaptation efforts in the region.

39. Currently, green house gas emissions resulting from transport are highest in the ECE countries, where they account for 30 per cent of the carbon dioxide emissions of the Member States. In the vast majority of countries, the major share of polluting emissions is attributable to road transport. The ECE World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations is currently investigating alternative fuels of the future, for example, liquid petroleum gas, natural gas, hydrogen and biofuels, and is discussing new regulations for vehicle technologies that have the potential to offer significant energy savings, including electric and hybrid vehicles, intelligent transport systems and gear-shift indicators. The World Forum recently decided to focus on the harmonization not only of vehicle regulations but also of fuel quality standards. A number of other ECE environmental conventions also promote adaptation and mitigation policies and measures and foster regional cooperation. The Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution and its related protocols and the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes and its Protocol on Water and Health are two examples in this regard.

Box 3

Promoting an energy efficiency market in Eastern Europe

Through its Energy Efficiency 21 project, ECE is promoting the formation of an energy efficiency market in Eastern Europe so that cost-effective investments can provide a self-financing method of reducing global green house gas emissions, including through a subproject, initiated in May 2007, on financing energy efficiency investments for climate change mitigation, which is supported by several partners. This initiative was designed to promote the formation of a market for energy efficiency in 12 Eastern European, South-Eastern European and Central Asian countries to reduce green house gas emissions, including through capacity-building and the provision of finance for bankable projects to reduce carbon dioxide emissions through a $250 million public-private partnership equity fund managed by external professional fund managers.

D. South-South cooperation: a vehicle for development and reducing disparities in the regions

40. The emergence of a new South as a powerful economic force is apparent. In all regions, pivotal countries or groups of countries, promising driving forces in their regions, are providing strong support to South-South cooperation.

41. With the world's fastest growing economies located in the Asia-Pacific region, South-South cooperation has assumed a new dynamism. In 2007, rapid growth in Asia-Pacific trade continued. Regional exports jumped by 17.5 per cent on a year-to-year basis in 2006, while imports grew by 15.5 per cent. While the United States of America and the European Union have continued to be the major export markets for most developing countries in the region, an increasing share of exports is destined for other Asian developing countries, in particular the booming economies of China and India, which are boosting intraregional trade. In parallel to the Doha Round of trade negotiations, the countries of the region have pursued regional and bilateral trade agreements as a complementary strategy for trade liberalization.

Box 4
Regional trade agreements: a useful tool for promoting regional cooperation and integration

According to the ESCAP Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database, there were over 130 regional and bilateral trade agreements involving ESCAP members at the end of 2007, compared with 49 in 2000 and 18 in 1990. Viewed as "second best" to the multilateral trading system, regional trade agreements can be a very useful tool for promoting regional cooperation and integration, although the net impact of regional trade agreements on trade creation is not always positive and many remain unratified and unimplemented.

42. There are also regional trade agreements with partners within and outside of the region that have the potential to lead rule-setting and future trade trends. One such regional trade agreement is the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement, whose secretariat is ESCAP. The Agreement is the only one of its kind that groups the leading economies of China, India and the Republic of Korea with that of Sri Lanka and two least developed countries, Bangladesh and the Lao People's Democratic Republic. The members have committed themselves to expanding membership in the Agreement so that it may evolve into a truly Pan-Asia-Pacific trade agreement and a principal modality for South-South cooperation and regional integration. The Agreement is open to all ESCAP developing countries that are members of the Commission. Discussions are under way with a number of countries, including countries in ASEAN, Central Asia and the Pacific, on their possible accession to the Agreement.

43. Intraregional trade grew in other regions as well. For example, intraregional trade among ESCWA member States, excluding trade in crude oil, is estimated to have increased from $20,963.6 million in 1997 to $31,630.3 million in 2003, registering an increase in its share of total trade from 11 per cent in 1997 to 15.3 per cent in 2003. More significantly, intraregional trade among members of the Gulf Cooperation Council

Customs Union witnessed an increase in both imports and exports, registering an increase of 304.8 percent in exports during the period from 1994 to 2005. In January 2008, the States of the Gulf Cooperation Council launched their joint common market after having agreed on all basic requirements and preparations over the period since the 2002 summit in Doha. In the ECE region, the particular emergence of a richer Russian Federation may open up market opportunities for several of the transition economies of the region, especially those of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. In 2006, for example, imports to those countries from the Russian Federation accounted for 16 per cent of the total and intraregional imports accounted for another 30 per cent. ESCWA and ECE, like the other regional commissions, support such trends through trade facilitation and the provision of trade-related technical assistance and data.

44. The potential of South-South Cooperation as a vehicle for development and disparity reduction within and among regions goes beyond trade. For instance, ECLAC is providing support to regional integration and macroeconomic policy coordination among the Andean Community, Central America and Mercosur through the Macroeconomic Policy Dialogue Network. This regional network, composed of central bankers and high-level authorities of the ministries of finance of the countries of the region, fosters macroeconomic dialogue and the exchange of good practices among policymakers on, inter alia, fiscal aspects of economic convergence, debt management and the role of regional reserve funds. Recently the emphasis has been on topics such as fiscal harmonization, macroeconomic asymmetries and regional financial markets. As a result of networking, a working group on macroeconomics was established within the framework of the Central American chapter of the Network to support the technical work of the Monetary Policy Committee of the Central American Monetary Council.

45. Technology transfer appears to be another promising area for South-South cooperation. The Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, a regional institution of ESCAP, contributes to knowledge-based networking for development through established technology transfer networks in the Asia-Pacific region. The Centre promotes South-South cooperation for environmentally sound technology transfer and partnership-building with international organizations and national stakeholders. The regional commissions are also following up on the implementation of regional plans of action for the information society, promoting, through the process, mutually complementary and coherent strategies and programmes for ICT-related South-South technology transfer.

Box 5

A technology centre for development in the Arab region

ESCWA is working on the establishment of a technology centre for development, whose mission is to assist public and private organizations within ESCWA member States, through South-South cooperation, to attain technological parity with other nations and regions and to acquire the necessary tools to accelerate socio-economic development. The technology centre is to work closely with existing national and regional centres. To ensure that technological acquisitions become an integral part of the national and regional economy, the acquisition of new technologies will be undertaken by the national firms and organizations, rather than by the centre.

46. Several other examples exist for intraregional and interregional South-South cooperation in the ECA and other regions. Egypt, for example, through its Fund for Technical Cooperation with Africa, has implemented over 45 development projects and provided humanitarian assistance to at least 30 African countries. The new flow of investments and development assistance to Africa from countries like China and India is another example of interregional South-South cooperation. Similarly, Arab multilateral and bilateral development banks and funds have contributed over $80 billion in development assistance over the last three decades to developing countries within and outside the Arab world. In 2005, at the Second South Summit, Qatar announced that it would establish and host the "South Fund for Development and Humanitarian Assistance" and pledged $20 million to assist the countries of the South in their developmental efforts in economic, social, health and educational development, and to address the problems of hunger, poverty and human catastrophes. In much of these social development areas, the regional commissions are partnering with other United Nations and non-United Nations organizations to help the recipient countries in building the national and regional capacities needed to optimize the use of these new resources.

II. Developments in other selected areas of regional and interregional cooperation

A. Additional policy issues addressed by the regional commissions at their ministerial sessions and other high-level meetings

47. The regional commissions actively considered most of the issues highlighted in section I of the present report during high-level meetings or annual ministerial sessions held since the 2007 substantive session of the Council. During the period under consideration, four of the regional commissions (ECA, ESCAP, ESCWA and ECLAC) held their annual or biennial ministerial sessions and ECE organized a number of area-specific ministerial-level meetings, at which major policy issues of relevance to the respective regions were discussed.

48. ECA held its first joint annual meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (Addis Ababa, 31 March-2 April 2008). The meeting, which was preceded by a joint expert meeting from 26 to 29 March 2008, was the first of its kind since the African Union and ECA decided to hold joint meetings of ministers as part of their renewed strategic partnership to better assist the African countries in meeting their sustainable development challenges. The meeting also presented an opportunity to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of ECA. In a special declaration, the ministers recognized the history of the Commission's significant achievements in the discharge of its mandate to promote the economic and social development of its member States, foster regional integration and promote international cooperation for Africa's development. The ministers also acknowledged the important role that the Commission must continue to play in helping to address Africa's socioeconomic challenges and advance the integration agenda.

49. The main theme of the first joint meeting was "Meeting Africa's new challenges in the twenty-first century". In their interactive dialogue, African

ministers underscored the need to implement strategies to achieve sustained, shared and broad-based growth in order to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and effectively confront the challenges of the new century. The ministers reiterated their commitment to make employment creation an explicit and central objective of their economic and social policies for sustainable growth and poverty alleviation at the national, regional and continental levels. The issue of rising oil and food prices was widely debated. The ministers committed themselves to taking vigorous measures to implement all the pillars of the comprehensive African agricultural development programme. The African Union Commission and the African Development Bank were urged to finalize, as soon as possible, the feasibility study on the creation of an African oil fund in order to provide assistance to low-income and oil-importing countries in Africa. The importance of regional integration for advancing Africa's development agenda and accelerating progress through the New Partnership for Africa's Development and other initiatives, including the rationalization of the regional economic communities, was underlined. Renewed commitments were also made to scale up efforts to promote regional infrastructure development and intra-African trade. A number of resolutions on the above and other policy issues, including on the African Charter for Statistics, strengthening research and development and innovation in Africa and the ECA strategic framework for 2010-2011 were adopted at the meeting.

50. The theme of the sixty-fourth session of ESCAP, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, was "Energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific". Referring to a comprehensive study (E/ESCAP/64/34), delegations deliberated a number of issues, including energy efficiency, pricing, taxation systems, infrastructure financing, renewable and alternative energy sources, intraregional and subregional energy trade, energy sector governance and a trans-Asian energy system. Participants also discussed emerging social issues such as international migration and development for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States in follow-up to the request, made by the Commission at its 63rd session, that a high-level meeting on international migration and development be convened in close coordination with related international organizations on migration, preferably in 2008. The Commission secretariat has commenced discussion with some Governments and international and intergovernmental organizations on possible collaborative activities in this regard.

51. The session reviewed progress in the regional implementation of selected global and regional commitments and implementation by the ESCAP secretariat of resolutions relating to emerging social issues. In this regard, during the reporting period, ESCAP organized a regional workshop to further promote "accessible tourism", that is, tourism that benefits not only the tourism sector but also persons with disabilities, older persons and families with young and older members. ESCAP organized the High-level Meeting on the Regional Review of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing in Macao, China, from 9 to 11 October 2007, at which remaining gaps and proposed solutions to ageing issues in the region, such as resource mobilization and the strengthening of knowledge, expertise and capability for effectively implementing plans and policies, were identified. The Commission adopted its resolution 64/5 on the establishment of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport as a formal regional mechanism to facilitate close collaboration and more frequent interaction, notably in view of the entry into force

of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network in July 2005 and the expected entry into force of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Trans-Asian Railway Network in 2008. The Commission's efforts to support countries with special needs, including through the regional mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action and the Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, as well as its promotion of inter-country energy cooperation to benefit least developed countries in the Asia-Pacific region were also reviewed.

52. The meeting of the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries was held just before the sixty-fourth session of ESCAP, on 22 and 23 April 2008. The Special Body was apprised of the outcome of consultative meetings organized by ESCAP and the Pacific Islands Forum secretariat and hosted by the Government of New Caledonia in Noumea on 12 and 13 March 2008. Under the theme of "Promoting Asia-Pacific linkages through regional cooperation", Pacific leaders and senior ministers and heads of subregional organizations and Pacific intergovernmental entities explored ways to strengthen ESCAP programmes in the Pacific and identified possible areas for cooperation between Pacific island developing countries and ASEAN. In follow-up, ESCAP has initiated action to strengthen the voice of Pacific island States in the Commission, including through regional arrangements on South-South cooperation and institutional modalities. The secretariat will also undertake a review of Pacific progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other key internationally agreed development frameworks in order to assist Pacific island developing countries in identifying policy options.

53. ESCWA held its twenty-fifth session from 26 to 29 May 2008 in Sanaa, with "Financing for development in the ESCWA region" as the theme for the ministerial discussions. Other issues discussed in chapter I above were also on the agenda. In addition, the session deliberated means to strengthen the national statistical capacities of member countries, for which the secretariat prepared a background document on ways to strengthen the role of national statistical organizations in applying the basic principles of official statistics issued by the United Nations. Progress towards the establishment of an Arabic language centre at ESCWA was also discussed, based on the outcome of an expert group meeting on the topic that was held in Beirut on 2 and 3 May 2007, with a view to defining the nature, goals and activities of the centre. The session also reviewed the outcome of the evaluation of 18 sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies.

54. The main theme of the thirty-second session of ECLAC, held in Santo Domingo from 9 to 13 June 2008, was "Structural change and productivity growth — 20 years later: old problems, new opportunities". The secretariat prepared a report, debated in a seminar, which placed emphasis on diversification of production and innovation and on public-private alliances for establishing a medium and long-term strategy for furthering development in the region. During the session, and as part on the regional consultations on financing for development, a high-level panel on gender and financing was organized by the Secretary of State for Women's Affairs of the Dominican Republic and the ECLAC secretariat. The secretariat also presented the outcomes of the Second Regional Intergovernmental Conference on Ageing in Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Brasilia in December 2007, and the forty-sixth session of the Commission for Social Development, held in New York in February 2008. In that context, member countries identified specific activities to be carried out by ECLAC in the next two years. That process was

facilitated by a document prepared by the secretariat on demographic transformations and their influence on development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in which up-to-date information on demographic trends in Latin America and the Caribbean were made available to member countries in order to assist them in identifying the main challenges to development in the region in a situation marked by rapid and intense demographic change.

55. The sixtieth anniversary of the Commission, in 2008, will be celebrated in a series of special activities throughout the year. One highlight was the high-level seminar, "ECLAC at 60: visions of Latin America and the Caribbean", held in Santiago, on 28 April. The event was attended by renowned scholars and included two round-table discussions featuring a number of former Presidents from the region and several former Executive Secretaries of ECLAC. The President of Chile, the guest of honour, concluded the event. Other celebratory activities include the release of a new publication reviewing highlights of this United Nations Commission's sixty-year history and a complementary text on the intellectual contributions and influence of ECLAC staff and collaborators to the formulation of public policies.

56. The biennial session of ECE will be held in 2009. In 2008, ECE addressed four major policy areas through ministerial-level conferences. Participants in the Ministerial Conference on Ageing, held in León, Spain, in November 2007, discussed progress achieved in the implementation of the Regional Implementation Strategy of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing 2002 and adopted a ministerial declaration, entitled "A society for all ages: challenges and opportunities", which reaffirmed the commitment of member States to implement the regional strategy. The issue of promoting environmental protection and sustainable development in the region was addressed at the Sixth Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in Belgrade, held in October 2007. The conference provided for continuation of the work on multilateral environmental agreements, environmental monitoring and assessment and the environmental performance review programme. Ministers and heads of delegation also voiced unanimous support for a reform to strengthen the effectiveness of the "Environment for Europe" process and to ensure that it remains aligned with the needs and priorities of ECE member countries. The ECE Committee on Environmental Policy is developing a reform plan in close consultation with member States and other stakeholders.

57. In the area of timber and forestry, the Fifth Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe was held in Warsaw in November 2007 on the theme "Forests for quality of life". It reviewed a comprehensive assessment of the state of Europe's forests and adopted a ministerial declaration and two resolutions containing commitments on the promotion of wood as a renewable raw material and a renewable energy carrier and the close interrelationship between forests and water in the context of climate change for implementation at a national level. In the transport area, the Ministers of Transport from European and Asian countries met in February 2008 at the seventieth session of the ECE's Inland Transport Committee to discuss numerous transport and transit problems and ways to overcome them. They reaffirmed their support for the development of Euro-Asian transport links by signing a ministerial declaration and endorsed the Euro-Asian routes identified in a joint ECE/ESCAP report and supported the creation of a mechanism to ensure coordination and monitoring of future activities.

B. Operational activities for development: the regional dimension

58. The General Assembly, in its resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review on operational activities for development, requested the regional commissions to further develop their analytical capacities to support country-level development initiatives and to support measures for more intensive inter-agency collaboration at the regional and subregional levels. The Assembly also called upon the organizations of the United Nations development system and the regional commissions to intensify their cooperation and to adopt more collaborative approaches to support country-level development initiatives, in particular through closer collaboration with the resident coordinator system and by improving access to the technical capacities of the United Nations system at the regional and subregional levels.

59. During the reporting period, the regional commissions have intensified their efforts in this regard at all levels, in line with the requests of the General Assembly. At the global level, in October 2007 the regional commissions signed a cooperation framework agreement with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to optimize their comparative advantages and seek complementarities and synergies in their work at the regional and country levels. The agreement identified eight focus areas of collaboration, including: the facilitation by the resident coordinators of the involvement of the regional commissions in analytical and planning exercises by United Nations country teams, including in the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes; the coordination of advisory services provided to Governments; collaboration in the follow-up to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, at the regional level; development of regional knowledge-sharing networks; provision of regional and interregional technical cooperation; support to regional coordination mechanisms; joint staff training; and cooperation at global level, including within the United Nations Development Group on matters with a regional dimension. Both ECA and ECLAC have also signed memorandums of understanding with the respective regional bureaux of UNDP, identifying in more detail, the areas of collaboration and joint products in those regions and have initiated discussions with the bureaux to develop a management plan for implementing the memorandums. In addition, the regional commissions, through their New York Office, have been active in promoting the engagement of non-resident agencies in country-level development work, in particular through the work of the working group on non-resident agencies of the United Nations Development Group, which has been chaired by a representative of the New York office for the last two years. An assessment of the implementation of the action on non-resident agencies by the Group, during 2007, which is currently being prepared, should further enhance the involvement of the agencies and the regional commissions in country-level development work and ensure added value at the regional level.

60. At regional level, the regional commissions stepped up their efforts to further strengthen inter-agency collaboration through the regional coordination mechanisms, mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1998/46 (annex III). During the reporting period, three regional commissions (ECA, ECLAC and ESCAP), convened their annual regional coordination mechanism meetings under the renewed chairmanship of the Deputy-Secretary-General. In the

ESCAP region, the mechanism has been meeting more frequently with both regular and ad hoc meetings. In a visit to ESCAP in December 2007, the Secretary-General himself chaired one of the meetings, during which he encouraged greater alignment and interaction between the mechanisms and the regional directors teams and further integration of the work of the non-resident and regional agencies in national processes in support of national development priorities. In their endeavour to seek complementarities and synergies between the regional coordination mechanisms and the regional directors teams and to promote more coherence in the work of the United Nations at the regional level, the commissions are currently undertaking a study, in consultation with their partners, on this matter. The commissions also participated in the most recent global meeting of the regional directors teams, held in March 2008, at which the importance of seeking complementarities between the work of the teams and of the Commissions was stressed and the participation of representatives of the commissions in the team meetings encouraged.

61. At the country level, the regional commissions have taken an active role in the United Nations system drive towards more coherence in delivering its services. ECA and ECLAC were part of the "delivering as one" initiative in Rwanda and Uruguay, respectively. The regional commissions with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and other non-resident agencies, are founding members of the newly established cluster on "trade and productive capacity of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The cluster was launched in the presence of the Secretary-General on the margins of the twelfth session of UNCTAD, held in Accra in April 2008. It represents a welcome initiative through which a number of non-resident agencies have teamed together to package their services and technical expertise in support of the growth agenda of developing countries, according to their priorities. In the meantime, the regional commissions continue to provide their advisory services in line with their competencies and in response to demands from the Governments of their member countries and to provide their technical assistance through the valuable resources of the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account. The commissions are also actively pursuing their efforts to integrate the regional dimension in the common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework processes, in collaboration with the resident coordinator system and the United Nations country teams.

C. Interregional cooperation among the regional commissions

62. Since the last reporting period, the Executive Secretaries pursued their regular meetings and interactions to further coordination and collaboration among the five commissions, holding five meetings, including on the margins of the Economic and Social Council and the regular session of the General Assembly, as well as in relation to major events such as the United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, in December 2007, and the annual meeting of the regional commissions, held by the current coordinator, the Executive Secretary of ECA, in Addis Ababa, on 16 and 17 June 2008. The annual meetings of the regional commissions continue to prove their value and strategic importance to the work and positioning of the commissions in their endeavour to better serve member countries. Many initiatives highlighted in the present report owe their genesis and

implementation to those meetings, including: the active pursuit of the regional follow-up to the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals; the regional financing for development consultation meetings; collaboration on disaster risk assessment and management; and the strategic collaboration with UNDP and the regional directors teams. Furthermore, a number of high-level side events were organized, including on climate change at the Climate Change Conference and on the issue of aid for trade at the twelfth session of UNCTAD in Accra. Consultations are ongoing with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on better collaboration to serve the new functions of the Economic and Social Council, notably the annual ministerial reviews and the Development Cooperation Forum, including through regional meetings in preparation for the global events.

63. The regional commissions also agreed to align the annual meetings of their chiefs of programme planning with the annual meetings of the Executive Secretaries organized by the current coordinator. At the last meeting of the chiefs of programme planning, hosted by ECE in October 2007, important issues relating to further harmonization and exchange of good practices among the commissions on matters related to programme planning, budget and management were discussed. The meetings have resulted in increased harmonization among the commissions in: applying results-based management, notably in monitoring and evaluation and the use of their technical advisory services; the development and implementation of Development Account projects; and knowledge management and publications. As the secretariat of the meetings of the Executive Secretaries, and through its participation in the meeting of chiefs of programme planning, the New York Office ensures follow-up to the decisions taken by the Executive Secretaries and feedback on relevant recommendations made by the chiefs. In February 2008, the Office launched a revamped website (www.un.org/regionalcommissions) as a corporate window for the Commissions at the global level.

United Nations E/2008/15/Add.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 June 2008

Original: English

Substantive session of 2008
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Item 10 of the provisional agenda*
Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

Summary

The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields contains resolutions and decisions adopted at the regular sessions of the regional commissions in the first half of 2008: the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific held its sixty-fourth session in Bangkok, from 24 to 30 April 2008; the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union convened the first session of the Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy in Addis Ababa, from 31 March to 2 April 2008; the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia held its twenty-fifth session in Sana'a, from 26 to 29 May 2008. The thirty-second session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean is to be held in Santo Domingo from 9 to 13 June 2008, and any resolutions and decisions emanating from that session that require action by the Council or are to be brought to its attention will be included in a subsequent addendum (E/2008/15/Add.2).

* E/2008/100.

08-37348 (E) 020708

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Matters calling for action by the Council	1–2	3
	A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	1	3
	Restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission		3
	B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	2	11
	Admission of the Sudan as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia		11
II.	Matters brought to the attention of the Council	3–83	12
	A. Economic Commission for Africa	3–53	12
	B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific	54–65	22
	C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	66–83	26

I. Matters calling for action by the Council

A. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

1. At its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) approved the following draft resolution for adoption by the Council.

Restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission

The Economic and Social Council,

Noting the adoption by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific at its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, of the resolution on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission,

1. *Endorses* the resolution on the restructuring of the conference structure of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, as set out in annex I to the present resolution;

2. *Also endorses* the annexes to the resolution on the conference structure of the Commission; on issues to be addressed by the committees subsidiary to the Commission; and on the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission, as set out in annexes II, III and IV to the present resolution.

Annex I

Resolution 64/1
Restructuring of the conference structure of the Commission

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling its resolutions 143 (XXX) of 5 April 1974, 210 (XXXVI) of 29 March 1980, 262 (XLIII) of 30 April 1987, 47/3 of 10 April 1991, 48/2 of 23 April 1992, 51/3 of 1 May 1995, 52/1 of 24 April 1996 and 53/1 of 30 April 1997 on the conference structure of the Commission,

Recalling also its resolution 58/1 of 22 May 2002 on restructuring the conference structure of the Commission, and in particular paragraph 7 thereof on the requirement for a review to be conducted at its sixty-third session,

Recalling further its resolution 61/1 of 18 May 2005 on the midterm review concerning the functioning of the conference structure of the Commission,

Recalling its resolution 63/3 of 23 May 2007 on the review of the conference structure of the Commission, and in particular paragraph 1, in which the Commission decided to defer the review of the conference structure of the Commission, including its thematic and sectoral priorities and subsidiary structure, to its sixty-fourth session,

Recalling also General Assembly resolution 61/266 of 16 May 2007 on multilingualism, in particular paragraphs 4, 7, 9 and 11 thereof, as applicable to the Commission,

Noting the Commission's unique role as the most representative body for the Asian and Pacific region and its comprehensive mandate as the main economic and social development centre of the United Nations system for the Asian and Pacific region,

Noting also the importance of further cooperation between the Commission and subregional organizations, and the need to achieve synergies and build effective partnerships,

Taking note of the report on the external evaluation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific: key findings and proposals for action[1] as well as the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the inspection of results-based management practices at the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,[2]

Also taking note of the evaluations and recommendations of members and associate members concerning the outcomes of sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary structures held under the conference structure,

Having considered the report on the implementation of Commission resolutions 58/1, 61/1 and 63/3,[3]

Commending the initiatives of the Executive Secretary in facilitating an effective process of consultation among members and associate members on a comprehensive and thorough review of the conference structure of the Commission,

Underlining the fact that an effective conference structure requires a strengthened evaluation system, added transparency and enhanced communication with the member States,

1. *Decides* to revise its conference structure, with immediate effect, to conform to the pattern outlined in annex I to the present resolution;

2. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to take into account the revision of the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission in the future programme of work and strategic framework of the organization;

3. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary, bearing in mind the goal of maximizing the impact of the United Nations in the field of economic and social development in the Asian and Pacific region, to reorganize the secretariat so as to enhance its capability to service the subsidiary structure of the Commission;

4. *Further requests* the Executive Secretary to provide members and associate members with a preliminary assessment of the organizational and staffing implications of the revision of the intergovernmental structure subsidiary to the Commission within the next six months;

5. *Commends* the secretariat on the implementation of the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the official and working languages of the Commission and urges the Executive Secretary to continue efforts to monitor closely the strict implementation, as applicable to the Commission, of General Assembly resolution 61/266;

---

[1] E/ESCAP/63/19.
[2] E/ESCAP/64/30.
[3] E/ESCAP/64/19.

6. *Requests* the Executive Secretary to undertake systematic monitoring and evaluation of the conference structure and its link to the programme priorities of the Commission;

7. *Also requests* the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its sixty-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution, focusing in particular on whether the conference structure has served the purpose of improving efficiency and attracting higher and wider representation from members and associate members, which would serve as the basis for a midterm review of the functioning of the conference structure to be conducted during the sixty-seventh session;

8. *Decides* to conduct, at its sixty-ninth session, a review of its conference structure, including its subsidiary structure, taking into account the outcome of the midterm review referred to in paragraph 7 above, and requests the Executive Secretary to submit to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session a report analysing the functioning of the conference structure in order to facilitate the review.

Annex II

Conference structure of the Commission

I. The Commission

1. The Commission shall meet annually, with each session comprising a senior officials segment followed by a ministerial segment, for up to a maximum of seven working days to discuss and decide on important issues pertaining to inclusive and sustainable economic and social development in the region, decide on the recommendations of its subsidiary bodies and of the Executive Secretary, review and endorse the proposed strategic framework and programme of work, and take any other decisions required, in conformity with its terms of reference.

2. The sessions of the Special Body on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and the Special Body on Pacific Island Developing Countries shall be held for a maximum of one day each in alternate years, during the senior officials segment and shall have a status commensurate with the Committees of the Whole.

3. The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission Informal Working Group on Draft Resolutions convened prior to the Commission shall be reconstituted as the Working Group on Draft Resolutions during the senior officials segment and shall have a status commensurate with Committees of the Whole.

4. The number of simultaneous meetings of the Committees of the Whole, including their commensurate bodies, held during the senior officials segment of the annual session of the Commission, shall not exceed three.

5. Without prejudice to rule 31 of the rules of procedure of the Commission, members of the Commission intending to submit draft resolutions to the Commission are strongly encouraged to submit them to the Executive Secretary at least one month prior to the commencement of the session of the Commission in

order to allow sufficient time for review by members and associate members of the Commission.

II. Subsidiary structure

6. The subsidiary structure of the Commission shall consist of the following eight committees:

(a) Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development;

(b) Committee on Trade and Investment;

(c) Committee on Transport;

(d) Committee on Environment and Development;

(e) Committee on Information and Communications Technology;

(f) Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction;

(g) Committee on Social Development;

(h) Committee on Statistics.

7. The eight committees shall meet biennially, with four committees meeting each year, for a maximum duration of five days for each session.

8. Within their respective areas of purview, the committees shall:

(a) Review and analyse regional trends;

(b) Identify priorities and emerging issues and consult on regional approaches, taking into consideration subregional aspects;

(c) Promote regional dialogue, including its subregional synergies, and an exchange of experiences on policies and programmes;

(d) Consider common regional positions as inputs to global processes and promote regional follow-up to their outcomes;

(e) Propose issues for consideration by the Commission as possible resolutions;

(f) Monitor the implementation of Commission resolutions;

(g) Promote a collaborative approach to addressing the development challenges of the region, where appropriate, between Governments and civil society, the private sector and United Nations and other international institutions at the regional and subregional levels.

9. Further, within their respective areas of purview, the committees shall provide the secretariat, including its regional institutions, with guidance in reviewing the proposed strategic framework and programme of work.

10. The following areas shall be mainstreamed into the work of all committees:

(a) Implementation of the relevant internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

(b) Poverty reduction and sustainable development;

(c) Gender equality;

(d) Priority needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

11. The specific issues to be addressed by each of the eight committees in carrying out the above functions are listed in annex II to the present resolution.

III. Ad hoc ministerial conferences and other intergovernmental meetings

12. Subject to the approval of the Commission, ad hoc ministerial conferences and other intergovernmental meetings may be organized on specific and cross-sectoral issues.

13. No more than six such ministerial conferences or other intergovernmental meetings may be held during a calendar year, and the total number of days shall not exceed twenty.

14. In those years when a ministerial conference or intergovernmental meeting is held covering issues normally discussed in a committee, the corresponding committee need not be convened.

IV. Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

15. The functions of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission shall be in accordance with the terms of reference contained in annex III to the present resolution. The Advisory Committee shall advise the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for the sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, bearing in mind the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the development priorities of member States, in accordance with paragraph 5 of the terms of reference of the Advisory Committee.

16. The Advisory Committee may, if necessary, establish its own working groups for the consideration of specific issues.

17. The number of formal meetings of the Advisory Committee shall not exceed twelve per calendar year. Any additional meetings, formal or informal, will require the concurrence of the Advisory Committee and the Executive Secretary, and will not require documentation by the secretariat, unless otherwise requested on an exceptional basis by the Advisory Committee.

18. Should the need arise to seek the views of United Nations entities or other intergovernmental organizations on subjects of interest to the Advisory Committee, members of the Advisory Committee can, if consensus has been reached, request the secretariat to invite representatives of particular United Nations entities or other intergovernmental organizations to attend a subsequent session of the Advisory Committee.

V. Existing regional institutions under the auspices of the Commission

19. The following institutions under the auspices of the Commission shall continue to function as prescribed in their respective statutes and terms of reference:

(a) Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology;

(b) Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Secondary Crops Development in Asia and the Pacific;

(c) Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific;

(d) United Nations Asian and Pacific Centre for Agricultural Engineering and Machinery;

(e) Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development.

VI. General provisions

A. Rules of procedure

20. Unless otherwise specified by the Commission, the rules of procedure of the Commission, including those pertaining to the decision-making process, shall apply, mutatis mutandis, to the committees.

B. Informal session

21. An informal session among the heads of delegations during the ministerial segment of each Commission session may be organized but shall not be institutionalized. The agenda for the informal session shall be decided by consensus and the annotated agenda shall reach members at least thirty days before the opening of the session to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the session. Simultaneous interpretation shall be provided.

Annex III

Issues to be addressed by the committees subsidiary to the Commission

1. Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development:

- Experiences and practices in formulating and implementing macroeconomic policies to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable and inclusive development
- Regional economic development policies and options, including in the area of financing for development
- Strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals, with a special focus on poverty reduction

- Pro-poor economic growth for increasing the income and employment of the poor
- Progress towards graduation of the least developed countries through the mobilization of regional efforts to address poverty reduction and other identified concerns of countries with special needs[4]
- Policy options and programmes for reducing rural poverty, including those with a gender dimension, through the sustainable development of secondary crops

2. Committee on Trade and Investment:

- Regional cooperative mechanisms and agreements in trade, investment and finance, including the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement
- Policy options on trade and investment, enterprise development and finance
- Policy options and strategies for sustainable economic growth and rural poverty reduction through agro-technology transfer and agro-based enterprise development
- Technology transfer to address regional development challenges

3. Committee on Transport:

- Transport policy options and programmes, including those targeting the Millennium Development Goals
- The Asian Highway, Trans-Asian Railway and other initiatives promoted by the Commission for planning international intermodal transport linkages
- Measures to improve road safety and the efficiency of transport operations and logistics
- Support for the accession and implementation of international transport agreements

4. Committee on Environment and Development:

- Integration of environmental sustainability in development policy
- Policies and strategies for the use of sustainable planning and the use of water resources
- Regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy resources

5. Committee on Information and Communications Technology:

- Integration of information and communications technology (ICT)-related issues in development policies, plans and programmes
- Transfer and application of ICT at the regional and subregional levels
- Development of human and institutional capacity in the use of ICT
- ICT applications for disaster risk reduction

[4] The report of this Committee would be submitted to the Special Bodies on Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries and on Pacific Island Developing Countries.

6. Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction:

- Policy options and strategies on multi-hazard disaster risk reduction and mitigation
- Regional cooperation mechanisms for disaster risk management, including space and other technical support systems
- Multi-hazard assessment, preparedness, early warning and response to disaster risks

7. Committee on Social Development:

- Implementation of internationally agreed commitments, including those agreed at the United Nations on social development, population, ageing, disability, youth and disadvantaged groups, gender equality and health
- Policy options, strategies and good practices in social policy and protection
- Social policies and financing aimed at building inclusive societies

8. Committee on Statistics:

- Tracking key socio-economic and environmental trends in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region, especially progress towards the Millennium Development Goals
- Identifying data requirements for economic, social and environmental analysis in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices
- Capacity-building for national statistical offices in the ESCAP region to produce, disseminate and analyse data in accordance with internationally agreed standards and good practices

Annex IV

Terms of reference of the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission

The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives and Other Representatives Designated by Members of the Commission shall have the following functions:

(a) Maintain close cooperation and consultation between the members and the secretariat of the Commission;

(b) Advise and assist the Executive Secretary in drawing up proposals for the strategic framework and programme of work, consistent with the guidance provided by the Commission;

(c) Receive on a regular basis information on the administrative and financial functioning of the Commission, and assist and advise the Executive Secretary in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the programme of work of the Commission;

(d) Review the draft calendar of meetings prior to its submission to the Commission at its annual session;

(e) Advise the Executive Secretary on the provisional agenda for sessions of the Commission and committees subsidiary to the Commission, bearing in mind the need to ensure a results-oriented and focused agenda that is aligned with the development priorities of member States, as well as chapter II of its rules of procedure;

(f) Advise the Executive Secretary on the identification of emerging economic and social issues and other relevant issues for incorporation into the provisional agendas of the Commission sessions;

(g) Assist the secretariat in the formulation of the annotated provisional agenda for each session of the Commission before it is finalized;

(h) Carry out any other tasks to be entrusted to it by the Commission.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

2. At its twenty-fifth session, held in Sana'a, from 26 to 29 May 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) approved the following draft resolution for adoption by the Council.

Draft resolution I
Admission of the Sudan as a member of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

The Economic and Social Council,

Taking into consideration paragraph 2 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1818 (LV) dated 9 August 1973 concerning the terms of reference of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, which provides that members of the Commission* shall consist of the States Members of the United Nations situated in Western Asia which at present call on the services of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut, and that future applications for membership by Member States shall be decided on by the Council upon the recommendation of the Commission,

Recalling that the Terms of Reference and Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia do not cover the geographical location of countries which may become members thereof nor proscribe a member of one regional commission from being at the same time a member of another regional commission,

* The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia comprises the following 13 members: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Recalling also that most of the other regional commissions have as members countries that are not located in the region that they serve,

1. *Welcomes with satisfaction* the request by the Government of the Sudan that it be admitted to membership in the Commission;

2. *Approves* the admission of the Sudan as a member of the Commission.

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

A. Economic Commission for Africa

3. At the first session of the Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy in Addis Ababa, the Commission approved a ministerial statement, a declaration for the fiftieth anniversary of ECA, and several resolutions, which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Summary of the ministerial statement, 3 April 2008, Addis Ababa

4. The African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development congratulated [the Federal Democratic Republic of] Ethiopia on its 2000 Millennium celebration as part of African heritage, consistent with General Assembly resolution 61/270 and the Declaration of the January 2007 African Union Heads of State and Government, and also congratulated the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on its fiftieth anniversary and commended its dedication and many contributions to the social and economic development of Africa.

5. The Ministers recalled the outcomes of the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit, the 2002 United Nations Conference on Financing for Development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the 2005 World Summit, the 2005 United Nations High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development, and the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance II (CAMEF II), and their statement at the conclusion of the fortieth session of the ECA Conference of Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development as important guideposts; and reaffirmed their commitment to the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and the African Union's New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) programme as the shared framework for development and global partnership.

6. Recalling the theme of the Joint Annual Meeting, "Meeting Africa's new development challenges in the 21st Century", the Ministers noted with subdued satisfaction that Africa's recent growth performance had been encouraging, even though its impact on poverty reduction and employment creation had been limited. There was therefore a need to implement strategies to achieve sustained, shared and broad-based growth in order to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and effectively to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Growth and employment

7. The Ministers reiterated their commitment to making employment creation an explicit and central objective of economic and social policies at the national, regional and continental levels, for sustainable growth and poverty alleviation. They recognized that scientific knowledge is a critical factor for growth, employment and poverty reduction and for the competitiveness of economies in the twenty-first century and said they would work closely with other sector Ministers to mobilize adequate resources to improve the quality and relevance of education, and to disseminate knowledge, science and technology, in order to develop and create new skills and capacities while building on existing capacities. They also recognized the important role the private sector could play in that regard.

8. The Ministers recognized the importance of improved natural resources management for growth and development in Africa, and said they would encourage the adoption of good governance principles in the extractive sector, and support the adoption and implementation of the recommendations of the review of the African natural resources sector undertaken at the last Big Table meeting, co-organized by ECA and the African Development Bank in February 2007, including the mainstreaming of natural resources governance into the African Peer Review Mechanism process.

9. The Ministers reiterated their recognition of the importance of statistics for growth and employment creation policies; applauded the efforts of the African Union Commission on the drafting of an African Charter on Statistics, and commended the efforts of the majority of their countries in participating in the 2010 Round Population Censuses. They committed themselves to collaborating with ECA, the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank in all facets, including in the provision on a timely and regular basis, of national data to harmonize and promote statistics and statistics capacity-building in Africa.

10. Aware of the constraints of weak infrastructure in growth and employment, the Ministers recalled the decisions of the 2007 second African Ministerial Conference on Financing for Development held in Accra on the theme of energy and infrastructure and committed themselves to scaling-up investments in infrastructure, including the multiple modes of transport, to facilitate rapid growth and employment expansion.

11. Recognizing the deep interdependence of their countries with the rest of the world and aware that events in other parts of the world could present opportunities as well as challenges for growth and employment in the region, the Ministers requested ECA and the African Union Commission to undertake a study on the implications for Africa of a possible slowdown in the economy of the United States of America and the global sub-prime mortgage crisis and to present the outcome of the study at the next Conference.

12. Welcoming the new opportunities for accelerating economic growth and employment creation resulting from the rapid expansion of South-South cooperation, and welcoming the lessons on policy and fiscal space being provided by the successes of a number of countries in the South, the Ministers committed themselves to taking full advantage of opportunities provided by South-South cooperation.

Rising oil and food prices

13. The Ministers underscored the need for countries to pursue alternative sources of energy, in the light of the finite nature of gas and oil resources, and recalled the decision by Heads of State and Government to explore the creation of an African Oil Fund to provide assistance to low-income and African oil-importing countries.

14. The recent rapid increase in international food prices, which is possibly cyclical, could represent a structural shift with long-term implications, and poses a significant threat to Africa's growth, peace and security. At the same time, the Ministers noted that the rise in food prices presented opportunities for increased food production in some of their countries. They said they would explore appropriate policies and measures to mitigate the effects of rising food prices on living standards, especially for vulnerable groups, while harnessing opportunities for increased food production presented by that phenomenon.

15. In response to the increase in oil prices, the Ministers urged the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to finalize as soon as possible, the feasibility study on the African Oil Fund and called upon continental institutions, such as the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank, to provide countries with platforms and networks for the sharing of experiences on natural resources management.

16. To address the escalating food prices, the Ministers committed themselves to taking vigorous measures to implement all the pillars of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme, with a view to achieving the structural transformation of the agricultural sector, as well as promoting intra-African trade and regional integration.

Governance and the capable State

17. The Ministers commended the President of the United Republic of Tanzania and the Chairperson of the African Union, Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, for his very inspiring address and presentation on the imperative of good governance and the capable State as a prerequisite of an effective response to the challenges confronting the continent as it strove to achieve sustainable social and economic development.

18. Acknowledging the progress made on the continent in recent years on good governance, the Ministers noted with appreciation the commitment of African leaders to good governance, as clearly demonstrated by the increasing number of countries acceding to the African Peer Review Mechanism, and said they would explore ways to allocate sufficient resources to support the process, including providing for the implementation of the resulting national programme of action and its mainstreaming into budgetary processes and medium-term frameworks.

19. Recognizing the importance of decentralization for promoting good governance and economic growth, as well as the challenges to capacity-building posed by the decentralization of administrative structures, the Ministers indicated that they would undertake measures, including enhancing public sector financial management in decentralized structures, to minimize the risks to good governance and growth that could result from decentralization.

Legal empowerment of the poor

20. The Ministers commended the former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa, for his presentation on the legal empowerment of the poor and took note of the recommendations of the Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor, recognizing that empowering the poor was central to economic development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and looked forward to the final report of the Commission to be submitted to the Assembly of African Heads of State and Government.

Millennium Development Goals

21. In commending the progress made thus far by some African countries towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the Ministers acknowledged that a number of countries had put in place and were implementing Millennium Development Goal-consistent national development plans or poverty-reduction strategies, but noted with concern that the majority of countries were still not on track in meeting all the Millennium Development Goals by the target date. The Ministers committed themselves to intensifying the implementation of national development plans or poverty-reduction strategies, optimize the use of available resources and mobilize additional resources to scale-up public sector investments, in order to reach the Goals by the target date.

22. The Ministers commended the United Nations Secretary-General for setting up the Africa Millennium Development Goals Steering Group and Working Group, and applauded the decision of the Heads of State and Government at the January 2008 African Union Assembly to endorse that initiative and to commit themselves to supporting it. The Ministers further commended the decisions of the United Nations Secretary-General to convene a High-Level Event on the Millennium Development Goals alongside the Africa's Development High-Level Meeting to be held in September 2008 to marshal additional support for achieving the Millennium Development Goals in Africa and for promoting Africa's overall development, and committed themselves to being active stakeholders in those two high-level events.

23. The Ministers hailed and endorsed the new initiative of the United Nations to promote peer learning and experience sharing among Member States through the United Nations Economic and Social Council's annual ministerial review; they also welcomed and endorsed the efforts of the United Nations to advance the role of international cooperation for development through the newly established Economic and Social Council Development Cooperation Forum. The Ministers committed themselves to taking full advantage of the opportunities provided by those two initiatives and called upon ECA to support the convening of regional annual ministerial reviews and the active participation of Member States in both the regional and the Economic and Social Council global annual ministerial reviews.

Long-term financing of health

24. While commending the expansion of access to treatment for people living with HIV and AIDS from 100,000 in 2003 to 1.3 million in 2006, the Ministers noted with concern the necessity for long-term sustainable financing of and investment in health created by that epidemic and other diseases, including tuberculosis and malaria. The Ministers said they would undertake, in concert with sector colleagues, to explore mechanisms to expand treatment access for people with HIV and AIDS

and intensify efforts to stem the further spread of that epidemic and of other related infectious diseases and malaria.

Financing for development

25. Taking note of the forthcoming global review of the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development[5] to be held in Doha in November 2008, the Ministers appreciated the importance of the review for efforts to mobilize additional resources to scale-up public and private sector investments and accelerate progress towards growth and development objectives. They underscored the need for the region to prepare for and participate actively in the forthcoming review and pledged to do so.

Mobilizing domestic financial resources

26. Recognizing the critical role of domestic resource mobilization for sustainable growth and development, the Ministers committed themselves to scaling-up efforts to mobilize domestic savings, strengthen financial systems, stem capital flight, promote the Pan-African stock exchange and reduce the transaction costs of remittances; and pledged to explore appropriate measures to ensure the channelling of domestic resources into productive investments.

Promoting international trade

27. In pointing out that trade capacity-building was critical to enhancing Africa's ability to take advantage of potential opportunities created in the multilateral trading system, the Ministers said they had reviewed progress in the implementation of the Aid-for-Trade initiative and were concerned by the slow rate of progress; they said they would undertake measures to ensure that their countries benefited fully from the initiative.

Increasing international financial and technical cooperation

28. The Ministers commended the increase in flows of official development assistance to the continent from traditional as well as new/emerging development partners, but noted that the recent increase in official development assistance was due to debt relief and humanitarian assistance and hence did not reflect additional resources for development financing. The Ministers called upon development partners to fulfil their commitments to improving aid effectiveness as expressed in the 2005 Paris Declaration, and also called upon the African Union Commission and ECA to continue to assist countries in preparing for the global review of the Monterrey Consensus.

External debt

29. While acknowledging the positive impact of debt relief on Africa's debt burden, the Ministers remained concerned that debt levels are still too high and continue to pose a challenge to the continent's ability to finance its development agenda. They noted the difficulties faced by non-Highly-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative countries in meeting their debt obligations, and mobilizing resources to

[5] *Report of the International Conference on Financing for Development, Monterrey, Mexico, 18-22 March 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.II.A.7), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

finance their development programmes and meeting the Millennium Development Goals, and called for more flexibility in the eligibility criteria for debt relief. Worried by the wide interval between Highly-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative decision and completion points in recent times, the Ministers called upon creditors to review downwards the conditions for accessing debt relief in order to shorten the time-to-completion point.

30. For many African countries, debt remains a dominant mechanism for financing public sector investments, promoting diversification of production structures and ensuring broad-based growth. But in order to maximize the contribution of debt, the Ministers said they would improve debt and public-sector financial management capacities and systems, and examine ways to improve prudence in the management of the full set of resources, reduce the importance of debt in their fiscal profiles by improving and strengthening their Inland Revenue systems, and broaden and deepen the tax base of their economies. The Ministers requested ECA, the African Union Commission and other relevant international organizations to facilitate peer learning and sharing of experiences on debt management.

Systemic issues

31. The Ministers recognized the importance of enhancing coherence, governance and consistency in international monetary, financial and trading systems, and called upon the international community to increase Africa's voice in the governance of international institutions that make decisions that affect Africa's economies.

Climate change

32. Climate change presents both opportunities and challenges to sustainable development on the African continent. Particularly concerned with the phenomena of desertification and deforestation, the Ministers reaffirmed commitment to effectively integrate and implement climate-change adaptation and mitigation strategies into national and regional development frameworks, and stressed the need to support efforts to build capacities in their countries in that area, including the capacity to access such funding mechanisms as the Clean Development Mechanism and Adaptation Fund and to take advantage of new trading opportunities, including carbon trading.

33. The Ministers called upon the African Union Commission, in collaboration with ECA and the African Development Bank, to support a consultative process of Africa's preparation for effective participation in the implementation of the Bali Road Map of multilateral negotiations for a post-2012 global climate agreement.

34. The Ministers welcomed and endorsed the ECA initiative to establish the African Climate Policy Centre to serve as the policy arm of the Clim-Dev Africa programme and urged the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank to take necessary action for the effective implementation of the programme.

35. In line with the decision of Heads of State and Government at their summit meeting in reference to drought, the Ministers called on ECA to strengthen its support to and partnership with the African Centre of Meteorological Applications to Development.

Imperative of regional integration

36. Reaffirming the importance of regional integration for advancing Africa's development agenda and undertaking measures to accelerate progress through the African Union's NEPAD programme and other initiatives, including the rationalization of the regional economic communities, the Ministers will also scale-up efforts to promote regional infrastructure development and intra-African trade. They will intensify efforts to speed up the necessary additional regional institutions in order to mobilize the necessary resources for financing of regional integration projects and programmes, and will further undertake to promote macroeconomic convergence in the regional economic communities.

Summary of the Declaration for the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa

37. The Ministers, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Economic Commission for Africa, declared that since its establishment half a century ago, the Commission had had a history of significant achievements in the discharge of its mandate of promoting the economic and social development of its member States, fostering regional integration, and promoting international cooperation for Africa's development.

38. Acknowledging that ECA had continually responded effectively to the demands of its member States in a changing regional and global environment, and reaffirming the continued substantive relevance of the ECA mandate, as well as their commitment to support and strengthen its effective implementation, the Ministers seized the opportunity of the Golden Jubilee commemoration to express gratitude to all the men and women who had worked, and continued to work, to implement the mandate of the Commission.

39. The Ministers acknowledged that for 50 years, ECA had closely partnered with the countries of the region as they had struggled to overcome structural handicaps, transform their economies and promote African ownership of the regional development agenda, and that the efforts of ECA had led to the establishment of significant new regional integration initiatives, frameworks and institutions, and new initiatives to address the continent's social and economic challenges. The Commission had played a vital role in formulating and advocating African common positions in global policymaking, as well as the articulation of new approaches for partnerships with the international community.

40. Guided by the glaring reality that much more progress was needed to uplift the living standards of the people of Africa and for Africa to "claim the 21st Century", the Ministers fully endorsed the ECA Golden Jubilee perspective that it was now necessary to collectively pause and reflect on whether the development trajectory was on the right path, as they considered Africa's future role in the global economy.

41. The Ministers reiterated that cooperation and integration were key to accelerating Africa's development and improving the well-being of present and future generations and would lay a cornerstone for political stability and durable peace in all parts of the region; acknowledged the important role ECA must continue to play in helping to address Africa's socio-economic challenges and advance the integration agenda; renewed support to the repositioned Commission as an essential forum to effectively meet the changing needs of its member States; emphasized the

need to do more to harness regional resources to meet Africa's development priorities; and pledged to fully support ECA as it worked to scale-up activities across the board to achieve results in the two pillars of its new strategic orientation, namely, promoting regional integration in support of the African Union vision and priorities; and meeting Africa's special needs and emerging global challenges.

Financing for development

42. The Ministers called upon African countries to accelerate efforts to boost domestic resource mobilization, create appropriate domestic conditions for investment, take measures to stem and reverse capital flight, and lay a more solid foundation for high and sustained economic growth; and requested Africa's development partners to make the Aid-for-Trade initiative operational and to ensure that it is not used as a basis to obtain concessions from African countries in the ongoing Doha Round of trade negotiations. The Ministers encouraged donors to adopt more flexible eligibility criteria in financing for development in the context of least developed countries and for debt relief under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiatives so as to enable non-Highly Indebted Poor Countries among the African countries to address their debt problems effectively; and urged donors to scale-up efforts to fulfil the commitments and pledges made to African countries on increasing the quantity and quality of aid, as reflected in the Monterrey Consensus, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the G-8 Africa Action Plan, and the declaration of the 2005 G-8 Gleneagles Summit.

43. The Ministers called for increased representation and powers for African countries in decision-making structures and processes of international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Bank for International Settlements; commended the Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union Commission for the research and technical support provided to African countries in the area of financing for development; and appealed to member States and their representatives at United Nations Headquarters to actively participate in preparatory meetings and workshops on implementation and reviews of the Monterrey Consensus.

Climate change and development in Africa

44. The Conference of Ministers welcomed and endorsed the establishment of the African Climate Policy Centre which had the objective of providing policy guidance to member countries and urged ECA to take the necessary action for its immediate operationalization; requested ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the African Development Bank to take the necessary measures for the effective implementation of Clim-Dev Africa through relevant national, subregional and regional institutions; and further requested ECA and its proposed African Climate Policy Centre to provide the necessary support to and strengthen its partnership with the African Centre of Meteorological Applications to Development.

Science with Africa: strengthening research and development, and innovation for Africa's socio-economic development

45. The Conference of Ministers commended the leadership of ECA and the African Union Commission for undertaking the timely and major event, namely the Science with Africa Conference and its far-reaching impact for strengthening the

African scientific community; urged African Governments to take the necessary steps in harnessing innovation, research and development activities to address development challenges, by increasing national budgetary allocations for research and development activities within the context of enhancing economic productivity and fostering innovation in national economies; encouraged African economic operators and higher education and research institutions to jointly support innovation, research and development activities within the context of enhancing economic development and productivity; invited the African Union Commission and ECA, in collaboration with the United Nations science and technology cluster, the African Development Bank and other international partners, to establish an African cluster for science and technology to foster the coordinated implementation of the Science with Africa Conference outcomes and recommendations as a mechanism to support the implementation of the African Union and its NEPAD Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action as well as the science and technology activities outlined in the ECA Business Plan and the ECA work programme and priorities for the biennium 2008-2009 and beyond.

46. The Ministers also called upon Africa's development partners to provide the necessary support to ensure the implementation of recommendations; and requested the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to take the necessary measures to implement the recommendations of the Conference, including facilitating partnership arrangements between Governments, the economic operators and civil society, assisted by research institutions and to report thereon at the next meeting of the Joint Conference.

Proposed Strategic Framework/Biennial Programme Plan for the period 2010-2011

47. The Conference of Ministers endorsed the proposed strategic framework/biennial programme plan of ECA for the biennium 2010-2011, taking into account the discussion and related observations made at the present meeting.

Special Meeting of the Governing Council of the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning

48. The Conference of Ministers endorsed the findings and recommendations of the external review, in particular those on the urgent need to reposition the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP); reaffirmed that the mandate and mission of the Institute remain relevant and stressed that it should strengthen its cooperation with other United Nations institutes and national, regional and international training institutions; reaffirmed the importance of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to the training and research agenda in Africa, on the basis of consistent and effective results-based management, and on a division of labour among the major regional organizations and other training and research institutions on the continent; and mandated the Executive Secretary of ECA, in his capacity as Chairman of the Governing Council, to take all the necessary measures to reposition IDEP, assuming direct responsibility for the management of the Institute, the revitalization of its deliberative organs, particularly the Governing Council and the Scientific Board, the updating of its statutes and the preparation of a programme budget over a transitional period of 12 months.

49. The Ministers urged the member States to commit themselves more clearly in the process of repositioning IDEP, particularly by providing substantial support and participating in the activities of the Institute and contributing financially to its budget; and requested the Executive Secretary of ECA, in consultation with the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Governing Council, to make proposals for alleviating the financial difficulties of the Institute, and to report thereon to the Conference at its next session.

African Charter on Statistics

50. The Conference of Ministers took note of the draft Charter and accepted in principle its objectives, aims and professional principles; requested the African Union Commission, in collaboration with members of the African statistical system, to further consult legal experts on the draft and to submit the revised draft Charter to the Executive Council of the African Union as requested by the Executive Council in its decision EXCL/DEC 330 (X) and to take all the measures necessary, working in cooperation with ECA, the African Development Bank and all members of the African statistical system, to finalize the studies on the mechanisms for implementing the charter and creating the fund for statistical development in Africa.

Millennium Development Goals

51. The Conference of Ministers took note of the decision of the United Nations to promote peer learning on and scale-up the contribution of international cooperation to efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals through the establishment of the Economic and Social Council annual ministerial review and the development cooperation forum and urged member States to actively participate in these forums; further took note of the resolution of the Accra Summit directing the African Union Commission, ECA and the African Development Bank to report on an annual basis to the Assembly of Heads of State and Government, on the region's progress towards the targets of the Millennium Development Goals; and requested ECA and the African Union Commission as much as possible to use updated national data in the Millennium Development Goal report and, in this connection, called upon Member States to make their national data available on a timely basis to the ECA African Centre for Statistics, the African Union Commission Statistics Unit, and the Statistics Department of the African Development Bank.

52. The Ministers called upon Africa's development partners to fulfil their commitments to scale-up official development assistance to Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; called upon African countries to meet their own commitments to increase budget allocation to Millennium Development Goal-sensitive sectors, in particular meeting the 10 per cent allocation to agriculture as agreed under the African Union Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme and the 15 per cent budget allocation to health as agreed in the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other related infectious diseases; took note of the presentation on the legal empowerment of the poor and looked forward to its finalization and submission to the African Union Assembly; took note with satisfaction of the efforts of ECA, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, to promote peer learning and experience sharing on the Millennium Development Goals through the African Learning Group on Poverty Reduction Strategies and the Millennium Development Goals; and commended ECA for

developing the Millennium Development Goal mapper and urged member States to explore its use in Millennium Development Goal reporting and planning.

Assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa

53. The Conference of Ministers urged the African Union Commission, in collaboration with ECA and the regional economic communities to continue advancing the regional integration agenda forward; called upon African member States to put more efforts in critical areas, such as infrastructure development and also requests existing subregional development banks to play a major role in funding infrastructure projects; further called upon the African Union Commission for speedy establishment of the pan-African financial institutions, particularly the African Investment Bank in order to mobilize the necessary resources for financing of regional integration projects and programme; commended the proposal of the secretariat to establish an observatory for regional integration in Africa as a platform for sharing knowledge and best practices on regional integration; further commended the joint publication by ECA and the African Union of the report on *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa*; and called upon member States and regional economic communities to demonstrate ownership by providing data and related information for its publication.

B. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

54. At its sixty-fourth session, held in Bangkok from 24 to 30 April 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) adopted nine resolutions and two decisions, which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Regional cooperation in the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters in Asia and the Pacific

55. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) urged the countries of the region and international and regional organizations to implement the Delhi Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction in Asia, adopted at the second Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held in New Delhi on 7 and 8 November 2007; and encouraged countries in the Asian and Pacific region to host the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction once every two years on a rotational basis. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to strengthen the role and capacity of ESCAP in the area of disaster risk reduction, and also to take effective measures to facilitate, in cooperation with relevant United Nations entities, the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters[6] in the region and the recommendations of the first and second Asian ministerial conferences on disaster risk reduction, within the framework of the programme of work of ESCAP; to work closely with the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, in particular the regional office for Asia and the Pacific, in supporting the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action in the region, including the organization of the biennial Asian Ministerial

[6] A/CONF.206/6 and Corr.1, chap. I, resolution 2.

Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction; and to report to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Promoting renewables for energy security and sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific

56. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific called upon all members and associate members, as appropriate, to cooperate proactively in the development of various renewable energy technologies through the sharing of policy and technological experiences; and to encourage and participate actively in subregional, regional and intraregional initiatives in the areas of capacity-building, renewable energy demonstration projects and public-private partnerships, so as to promote renewable energy technologies by improving their reliability through technical advances and their affordability by making them commercially viable. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to coordinate with the multilateral funding agencies with a view to enhancing financial and technology flows for the development and deployment of new and renewable energy technologies in developing countries; to facilitate synergies with regional groupings, such as the Economic Cooperation Organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, the Eurasian Economic Community, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, to promote the development of renewable energy technologies proactively by establishing links with the Commission; to establish an institutional cooperation mechanism with the active engagement of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology and expert research institutions; and to increase participation in public-private partnerships and initiatives that are designed to expand the use of renewable technologies through innovative policy options and practical measures, such as the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century, the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, the International Biofuels Forum and the Global Bioenergy Partnership; and to submit to the Commission at its sixty-seventh session a report on the progress made in implementing the resolution.

Implementation of the Seoul Declaration on Public-Private Partnerships for Infrastructure Development in Asia and the Pacific

57. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific urged members and associate members, as appropriate, to consider placing high priority in national development agendas on infrastructure development, promoting the role of public-private partnerships in infrastructure development at the regional, subregional, national and subnational levels; to review and assess their public-private partnership, sectoral and other relevant policy frameworks and action plans for infrastructure development; and to actively engage in regional cooperation initiatives. The Commission requested United Nations bodies and the specialized agencies, international financial institutions and other organizations, bilateral donors and the relevant offices of the United Nations Secretariat to provide further technical assistance, to support national and regional capacity-building and to facilitate the sharing of experiences related to public-private partnerships in infrastructure development; and requested the Executive Secretary, in close

collaboration with donor countries and development partners, to assist members and associate members in meeting infrastructure development challenges through regional and interregional cooperation in the development of public-private partnerships, the organization of meetings and regional networking arrangements aimed at promoting the exchange of experiences and information, provision of capacity-building programmes, and technical support, and to report to the Commission at its sixty-ninth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Establishment of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport

58. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific decided to establish the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport as a regional mechanism within the framework of the conference structure of the Commission; and requested the Executive Secretary to convene the first session of the Forum of Asian Ministers of Transport in 2009 and subsequently on a regular basis, with the first session deciding its frequency; to coordinate the convening of the forum with the Committee on Transport; to ensure that a regional policy-oriented agenda is placed before the forum, addressing transport infrastructure, transit policy, facilitation, logistics, interregional and international transport linkages, financing and safety issues, as well as their economic, environmental and social sustainability; to encourage members and associate members to host sessions of the forum; and to report to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region

59. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific welcomed the efforts of countries in the region, especially the developing countries, that have made progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, while remaining concerned about the fact that a large number of countries in the region continue to face major challenges, and encouraged countries in the region to make further efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, expressing its appreciation for the existing regional partnership on the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary, within her mandate and in close coordination with member States and United Nations entities and multilateral financial institutions, to continue, among other things, to reinforce regional partnerships on the Millennium Development Goals; to assess progress made towards achieving all Goals and targets in the ESCAP region and to transmit a progress assessment to the Economic and Social Council, in particular to its annual ministerial review, for its consideration; to assist countries in the region in achieving the Goals, in particular the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and Pacific island developing countries; and to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Financing for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 in the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region

60. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific recognized that several modalities can be followed to ensure resource flows to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as outlined in the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development[5] to the off-track countries;

and urged the developed countries that had not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product to least developed countries, and encouraged developing countries to build on the progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to explore the feasibility of establishing a regional Millennium Development Goal resource facility; to contribute to the possible review of the Economic and Social Council's existing mechanisms and take action, where appropriate, to ensure the effective review and implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields; and to report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Regional implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific

61. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific called upon all members and associate members to develop and implement inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based policies on disability in line with the recommendations contained in the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five; to mainstream the perspective of persons with disabilities in development initiatives, including in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; and to review the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five on a regular basis in preparation for the high-level intergovernmental meeting to be held in 2012. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members in building their capacity to implement the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five, in order to ensure the incorporation of a rights-based approach to disability into their policies and programmes; to improve the accessibility of the facilities and services of ESCAP for persons with disabilities; to continue strengthening the partnership between ESCAP and the Asia-Pacific Development Center on Disability; to convene a high-level intergovernmental meeting to review the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and Biwako Plus Five in 2012, the concluding year of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012; and to submit to the Commission at its sixty-sixth session, including to the relevant committee, a report on the progress achieved in implementing the resolution.

Midpoint review of the implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference

62. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific requested the Executive Secretary to assist members and associate members in building their capacity to integrate population factors into development planning; to conduct analytical studies, compile and disseminate relevant demographic and population-related information and data with a view to identifying key demographic trends and emerging issues in the Asian and Pacific region; to convene an expert group meeting in 2008 to review the implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and

Poverty[7] adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference; and to submit a progress report on the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session and a final report to the Commission at its sixty-eighth session.

Review of the operational details of the feasibility study for the establishment of an Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management

63. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific invited the Islamic Republic of Iran to review the operational details of the proposal, to clarify the implications, if any, of such changes on the scope, functions and value-added products and services to be offered, along with timelines for scheduling the introduction of those activities, and to submit them to the Commission at its sixty-fifth session. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to provide the Islamic Republic of Iran with technical assistance, if required, in the review of the operational details of the proposal.

Dates, venue and theme topic for the sixty-fifth session of the Commission

64. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific decided that its sixty-fifth session would be held in Bangkok in April and May 2009, bearing in mind the celebration of two national holidays in Thailand in the first two weeks of April and a number of other national holidays in countries of the region at the end of April and in the first 10 days of May, and that the theme topic for its sixty-fifth session would be "sustainable agriculture and food security".

Deferment of consideration of the draft resolution on the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management

65. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific decided to defer consideration of the draft resolution sponsored by the Islamic Republic of Iran, entitled "Establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Information, Communication and Space Technology-enabled Disaster Management",[8] to its sixty-fifth session.

C. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

66. At its twenty-fifth session, held in Sana'a, from 26 to 29 May 2008, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) adopted several resolutions, which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Addressing climate change issues in the Arab region

67. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia requested the secretariat to prepare an assessment of the vulnerability to climate change of economic and social development in the region, with particular emphasis on fresh

[7] "Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference: Report and Plan of Action on Population and Poverty" (Asian Population Studies Series, No. 159 (ST/ESCAP/2264)) (New York, 2003).

[8] E/ESCAP/64/L.10.

water resources; encouraged member countries actively to support and participate in the preparation of the aforementioned vulnerability assessment, including by providing facilities and information; requested the secretariat to take the measures necessary to increase awareness of climate change, in respect of adjusting to and alleviating its impact, and to work with member country Governments and initiate dialogue over the relevant recommendations, and to develop an Arab framework action plan on climate change, in partnership with the League of Arab States, the United Nations Environment Programme's Regional Office for West Asia and other relevant regional organizations; and requested the Executive Secretary to make available through the regular budget the resources necessary to implement those activities and to report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the findings and recommendations arising from the assessment and any additional action taken in that regard.

Mitigating the impact on development of conflict, occupation and instability in member countries of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

68. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia welcomed the establishment in ESCWA of the development subprogramme on the mitigation of the impact of conflict and occupation and called upon member countries to intensify efforts to enhance institutional capacities to respond to the challenges associated with conflict and occupation and support conflict or occupation-afflicted countries in overcoming socio-economic and political challenges. The Commission requested the ESCWA secretariat to intensify its efforts to raise awareness of the potential impact of conflict and instability on development; to build on successful ESCWA interventions in conflict or occupation-afflicted countries through the development and interchange of best practice and adaptation thereof for the use of other member countries; to contribute to the capacity-building of Government officials, focusing on management skills and strategy planning; to continue its efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to finance the implementation of capacity-building and other activities; and to enhance partnerships with relevant local, regional and international organizations. The Commission invited member countries and donors to support ESCWA in its endeavours to mitigate the impact of conflict and instability and the socio-economic ramifications thereof and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the progress achieved in implementing the resolution.

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia member country compliance with international standards for enhancing national statistical systems

69. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia requested member countries to take all the measures necessary in order to produce high-quality official statistics that can be used in international comparisons, by applying international classifications, concepts and standards and activating statistical institutions; to adopt the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and take action to apply them; to complete the design and implementation of national strategies for statistical development, in accordance with the general orientations issued by Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21); to empower the statistical machinery to publish data in a timely fashion by adhering to the conditions of the General Data Dissemination System that was issued by the International Monetary Fund; and to enhance the position of the national statistical

machinery within the national institutional structure and strengthen the structural factors that are connected to the legislative framework and regulatory arrangements in accordance with the Handbook of Statistical Organization that was issued by the United Nations in 2004.

70. The Commission requested the secretariat to hold training workshops on international classifications, concepts and standards; to support member countries in adopting and undertaking to apply the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics and in designing and implementing national strategies for statistical development; and to encourage member countries to participate in and adhere to the General Data Dissemination System and the Special Data Dissemination Standard of the International Monetary Fund. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to follow up the above recommendations and submit a report thereon to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Establishment of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia regional technology centre

71. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia requested the secretariat to finalize hosting arrangements; to coordinate with member countries over the establishment of a board of governors; to take the necessary measures to draft administrative regulations for the centre in preparation for approval by the board of governors; and to set up within ESCWA a multidisciplinary team to support and monitor progress in the operationalization of the centre, to be funded by extrabudgetary resources; and requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Integrated social policy

72. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia encouraged member countries to initiate national consultative dialogue aimed at adopting an integrated social policy approach and appealed to them to adopt a participatory approach through encouraging partnership between Government institutions, the private sector and civil society organizations in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of social policies; encouraged member countries to adopt and institutionalize integrated social policy and seek harmony and balance between economic priorities and social outcomes; and requested member countries to formulate national youth policies as part of their integrated social policy and national development plans and programmes.

73. The Commission requested the secretariat to build upon the experience of promoting integrated social policy in Bahrain, Egypt, the Sudan and Yemen and to intensify its endeavours in advocating and enhancing the capacity of member countries to formulate and adopt an integrated social policy approach, through developing and promoting this approach among member country decision makers and assisting member countries in implementing the internationally agreed plans of action and recommendations, including the Millennium Development Goals and World Programme of Action for Youth priority areas. The Commission requested the ESCWA Committee on Social Development to monitor progress in implementing the resolution and facilitate information and knowledge-sharing by member

countries; and requested the Executive Secretary to submit a report on the progress made in implementing the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Gender statistics for equality and empowerment

74. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia called upon member countries to adopt the set of indicators in the Arab Gender Issues and Indicators Framework as a common set of indicators, and to produce the statistics related to those indicators for use in the monitoring and evaluation of strategic policies and workplans in areas related to gender; called upon member countries also to develop a mechanism for the collection, dissemination and analysis of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data by rural, urban and age information for the formulation of gender-related and gender-sensitive policies and programmes; and encouraged member countries to formulate and implement training programmes to mainstream gender issues and statistics into their statistical systems, with a view to sensitizing data producers and users to the issue of gender equality and women's empowerment.

75. The Commission called upon the secretariat to provide technical support to member countries in the form of advisory services and workshops, and assist member countries in integrating a gender perspective into national policies for the development of statistics and national statistical system plans of action; requested the secretariat to work with member countries in developing a detailed gender database to act as a gender-mainstreaming observatory in all sectors; and called upon the secretariat to mainstream gender statistics, as appropriate, into its programmes and outputs. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session on the implementation of the resolution.

Strengthening statistical capacities for evidence-based policymaking

76. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia approved the recommendation of the Statistical Committee that ESCWA region NSO capacity-building needs of national statistical offices be periodically assessed in order to monitor progress; and urged member countries to produce Millennium Development Goal indicators, in particular those related to poverty, education and health, using surveys and other relevant sources, and to adopt the Common Set of Core Information and Communications Technology Indicators issued by the Global Partnership on Measuring Information and Communications Technology for Development, and make available the data related to those indicators for use in the drafting, evaluation and review of strategic policies and workplans in areas of priority for the development of an information society in the region.

77. The Commission stressed the need to strengthen impartiality of national statistical offices in order to produce objective data and urged member countries to exchange experience and information for best practice; commended the support given by Oman to the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses and the activities that it has undertaken for the 2010 Round of Population and Housing Censuses; and called upon member countries to accelerate implementation of the 1993 System of National Accounts. The Commission requested the secretariat to assist member countries in building their capacity to unify concepts and definitions and carry out multi-purpose family surveys and improve their administrative records

at the national level through holding workshops and providing technical services; to prepare and submit to the ESCWA Statistical Committee periodic reports on progress made in the development of statistical activities of national statistical offices, based on ESCWA region of national statistical offices capacity-building needs assessments; to facilitate, through its official web page on the Internet and the provision of technical consultancy, the interchange between member countries of experience and knowledge; and to increase its efforts to mobilize extrabudgetary resources to support various activities, including those of the Task Force on Population and Housing Censuses, and implement the 2010 Population and Housing Census Programme.

Establishing an Arabic language centre at the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

78. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, cognizant of the project document presented to Senior Officials segment of the twenty-fifth ESCWA session concerning the establishment of an Arabic language centre at ESCWA, to be involved in the coordination of Arabic terminology, organization of training sessions and building of cooperative relationships with translation institutes and universities, in accordance with the details set forth in the project document, in coordination with the Department for General Assembly and Conference Services, encouraged continued cooperation with ESCWA by the focal points designated by member countries for the project; and requested the Executive Secretary to explore ways and means to fund the project from extrabudgetary resources and to follow up on the implementation of the resolution and submit a report to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Supporting the comprehensive development efforts of Yemen

79. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia commented on the comprehensive development efforts exerted by the Government of Yemen that are aimed at eradicating poverty and meeting economic and social needs with the extensive involvement of civil society and the professional, academic and political social sectors; and recommended that the Commission provide more support of all types to Yemen, with a view to achieving the activities and efforts that are undertaken as part of comprehensive development and national efforts to realize the Millennium Development Goals.

Call for regional action to accelerate implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Western Asia

80. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia adopted the draft final communiqué that was issued by the Consultative Preparatory Meeting for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development held in Doha on 29 and 30 April 2008; affirmed the need for developing countries, including ESCWA member countries, to be more involved in the management of the global financial, monetary and trade system; called upon member countries to continue to support regional integration, including through increased interregional investment and trade, and also to support small and medium-sized enterprises and make available the financial resources necessary to create new youth employment opportunities; further called upon member countries to continue efforts to eradicate financial and administrative corruption, thereby enhancing opportunities to increase investment,

and to make use of available domestic financial resources; and requested member countries to exert greater efforts to increase their share of foreign direct investment.

81. The Commission requested the developed donor countries to honour their undertakings and increase official development assistance in order to assist in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, without placing any conditions on such assistance that could have a negative impact on the capacities of beneficiary countries; affirmed the need for member countries to make an effective contribution at the highest possible level to the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus; requested the ESCWA secretariat to strengthen cooperation with the relevant regional and international organizations and with the other United Nations regional commissions on Monterrey Consensus-related issues, with a view to supporting the position of the developing countries with respect to the formulation of international rules; called upon the ESCWA secretariat to follow up the outcome of the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and support member countries in studying and analysing new issues, to support member country efforts to build institutional capacities; and requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in implementing the resolution to the Commission at its twenty-sixth session.

Frequency of the sessions of the Commission and its subsidiary bodies

82. The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia decided to defer consideration of the relevant recommendations of the Committees on Energy and on Social Development, and of the Statistical Committee and the Technical Committee on Liberalization of Foreign Trade and Economic Globalization in the Countries of the ESCWA Region; called upon the secretariat to carry out an in-depth evaluation of the intergovernmental structure of ESCWA in the light of both programme priority, as identified by member countries and ongoing United Nations reforms, and to support, closely monitor and assess the contribution of the Technical Committee; and expressed its appreciation for the sharing of lessons learned from the evaluation of the intergovernmental sessions held during the period 2004-2007.

83. The Commission invited member Governments to review their internal distribution channels for ESCWA session documents, solicit feedback from the ministries or offices concerned on how distribution channels could be further improved and share the outcome of those reviews with the secretariat; requested the secretariat to improve and continually update the ESCWA website, with the aim of providing easy access to the archives of intergovernmental session documents, including reports; activate the member country official focal points identified by those countries; and decided to review the outcome of the in-depth evaluation at the twenty-sixth session.

E/2008/15/Add.2

Readex
Fiche

United Nations E/2008/15/Add.2

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
20 June 2008

Original: English

Substantive session
New York, 30 June-25 July 2008
Agenda item 10*
Regional cooperation

Regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Matters calling for action by the Economic and Social Council or brought to its attention

Summary

The present addendum to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields contains resolutions adopted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean at its thirty-second session, held in Santo Domingo, from 9 to 13 June 2008.

* E/2008/100.

08-39512 (E) 020708

I. Matters calling for action by the Council

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

1. At its thirty-second session, held in Santo Domingo from 9 to 13 June 2008, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) approved the following draft resolution for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.

Venue of the thirty-third session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Economic and Social Council,

Bearing in mind paragraph 15 of the terms of reference of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as rules 1 and 2 of the rules of procedure of the Commission,

Considering the invitation of the Federative Republic of Brazil to host the thirty-third session of the Commission,

1. *Expresses its gratitude* to the Government of Brazil for its generous invitation;

2. *Notes* the acceptance by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of this invitation with pleasure;

3. *Endorses* the decision of the Commission to hold the thirty-third session in Brazil in 2010.

II. Matters brought to the attention of the Council

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

2. At its thirty-second session, the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) adopted several resolutions which are hereunder brought to the attention of the Council.

Santo Domingo resolution

3. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) welcomed the comprehensive approach to development that had marked the thinking of ECLAC since its inception, as reflected in the Commission document entitled "*Structural Change and Productivity Growth — 20 Years Later. Old problems, new opportunities*"; recognized the relevance of the issues examined and supported the general tenor of the conclusions set out in the document. The Commission requested the Executive Secretary to conduct studies and formulate public policy and scientific and technological policy proposals, with a view to building national productive development and innovation capacities; promote regional cooperation in productive development and innovation policies; identify successful public-private innovation and productive development initiatives in the region that can be applied

and adapted to other national or regional contexts as best practices; and devote special efforts to considering the challenges faced by the countries and subregions as a result of the current global energy and food crisis. The Commission also requested the Executive Secretary to widely disseminate the document and promote its review in the economic, academic, political, business and social spheres in the region.

Priorities and programme of work of the Economic Commission for the biennium 2010-2011

4. The Commission endorsed the proposed priorities for the work of the Commission for the biennium 2010-2011 as set forth by the Executive Secretary, which encompassed the consolidation of the advances achieved in the area of macroeconomic stability and the subsequent promotion of policies to reduce vulnerability, an increase in the region's production potential and a reduction in productivity gaps, an improvement in the region's position in the international economy and the promotion of long-term production development strategies involving appropriate forms of public and private-sector cooperation and participation, the promotion of a broad social agreement to strengthen social cohesion, to reduce social risks and to strengthen gender mainstreaming in public policies, the refinement of sustainable development policies and an examination of the socio-economic implications of climate change, the strengthening of public management, and the improvement and consolidation of institutions relating to the management of global issues at the regional level. The Commission urged the Executive Secretary to make a special effort to examine the challenges faced by the region in connection with the current global energy and food crisis and related issues by undertaking specialized studies that would permit the provision of technical advisory services and the formulation of public policy options for dealing with such challenges.

5. The Commission approved the programme of work for the system of the Commission for the biennium 2010-2011, which included the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning, and which, with the guidance provided by the resolutions adopted at the thirty-second session of the Commission, would become the legislative mandate for the execution of programmes, projects and technical cooperation activities and for the production of recurrent publications identified therein. The Commission noted that the allocation of the necessary resources for implementing the activities described in the programme of work should be submitted to the relevant United Nations bodies for their consideration before being carried out. The Commission encouraged the Executive Secretary to continue the practice of convening the Committee of the Whole in the intervals between the sessions of the Commission in order to strengthen and broaden the dialogue between member States and the secretariat on issues deemed to be relevant; and requested the Executive Secretary to report on the progress made in implementing the resolution at the thirty-third session of the Commission.

Follow-up to the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean

6. The Commission requested the secretariat, within available resources, to provide support to the countries of the region, especially in the formulation of national strategies, for the fulfilment of the goals of the Plan of Action for the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean, which were derived directly from the commitments undertaken at the World Summit on the Information Society, by furnishing technical cooperation, carrying out studies and collaborating in the organization of meetings to the extent of its capabilities and competence; provide technical support for the Regional Follow-up Mechanism for the Plan of Action through studies, statistics and substantive reports on the information society and associated public policies, the preparation of newsletters, the maintenance and expansion of a collaborative virtual forum, and its cooperation in organizing technical meetings, the conference to be held to evaluate the Plan of Action and its preparatory process; provide technical support to the presiding officers of the Regional Follow-up Mechanism of the Plan of Action so that synergies may be sought with initiatives of international agencies that may contribute to the achievement of the goals set out in the Plan of Action; the presiding officers would consult with member States regarding any such initiatives; and provide technical support for the organization of the forthcoming Ministerial Conference on the Information Society in Latin America and the Caribbean to be held in Peru.

Activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in relation to follow-up to the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

7. The Commission requested the secretariat to continue to cooperate with the countries of the region in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields, including that of the 2005 World Summit; and also requested the secretariat to continue to coordinate the preparation of annual regional inter-agency reports on the progress made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goal targets on the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

Admission of the Cayman Islands as an associate member of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

8. The Commission approved the admission of the Cayman Islands as an associate member of the Commission.

South-South cooperation

9. The Commission took note with satisfaction of the report on activities to support such cooperation, which noted that there had been a large increase in extrabudgetary funding for technical cooperation activities of the Commission that

included a major South-South cooperation component;[1] urged the Executive Secretary to continue the efforts that had yielded positive results in terms of increasing the secretariat's provision of technical cooperation to the countries of the region; and requested the secretariat, in collaboration with other regional institutions, to support the preparatory activities of the High-level Conference on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, in particular the envisaged regional preparatory consultation.

Other resolutions adopted by the Commission at its thirty-second session

10. The Commission also adopted the following resolutions: 634 (XXXII), entitled "ECLAC calendar of conferences for the period 2008-2010"; 636 (XXXII), entitled "Support for the work of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning"; 638 (XXXII), entitled, "Statistical Conference of the Americas of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean"; 641 (XXXII), entitled "Caribbean Development and Cooperation Committee"; 644 (XXXII), entitled "Population and development: priority activities for the period 2008-2010"; and 645 (XXXII), entitled "Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean".

---

[1] See *Activities of the ECLAC system to promote and support South-South cooperation during the biennium 2006-2007. Note by the Secretariat* (LC/G.2371 (SES.32/7)).